

Making the Most of Life



George H. Hepworth



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MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE

THE FOURTH SERIES OF
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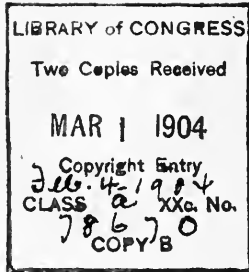
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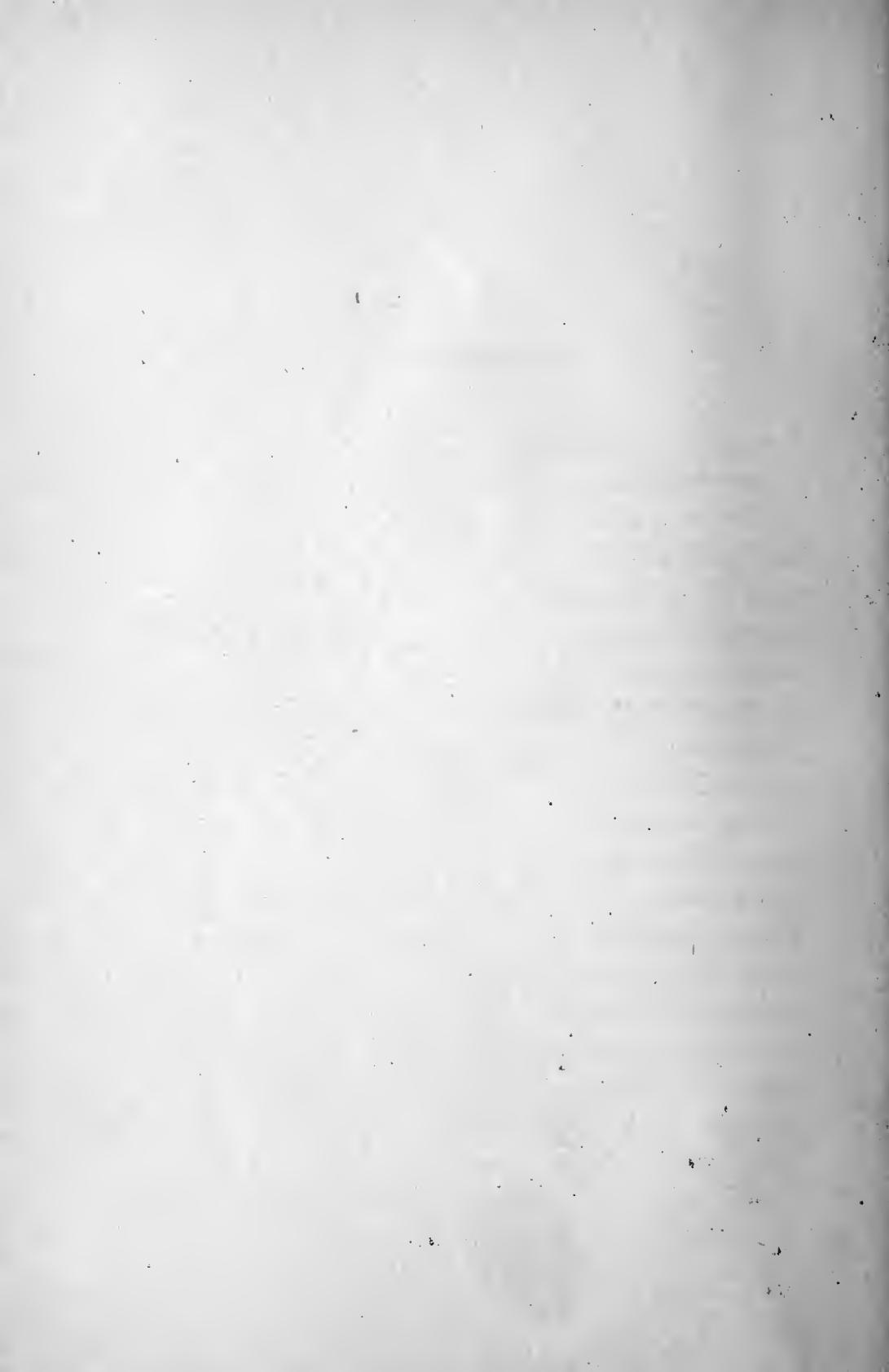
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By the courtesy of Mr. James Gordon Bennett,
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H. Hepworth.



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Making the Most of Life

MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE

Under His wings shalt thou trust.—Psalms xci., 4.

WHILE travelling in a strange country last winter I very soon learned that my first duty was to be prepared for anything that might happen. For that matter, it was not simply a duty, but a necessity.

There were serious inconveniences at every turn, and on more than one occasion imminent danger to limb or life. But after I had taken myself well in hand and begun to make a practical application of my religious belief, convincing myself that God could take care of me on a bleak, wintry night as easily as on a tropical morning, and that if any catastrophe occurred it was just as near to heaven

from the Persian border as from my little home in New York, my mental attitude produced a result which was exceedingly gratifying. I was not only more serene in temper, but better equipped to bear discomfort with patience, if not with indifference. Hardships became less hard and extreme weariness less wearisome from the moment I came to regard them as a slender price to be paid for valuable information.

I indulge in this personal reminiscence because my journey from sea to sea represents the journey we are all making from the cradle to the stars, and because the state of mind that gave me a power of endurance which oftentimes excites my wonder is precisely what is needed by every one who would get the best results from the various experiences of our human life.

To brood over evils and obstacles is to magnify them. To magnify them is to diminish your ability to resist or overcome. If you convince yourself that you can do whatever stint God may see fit to apportion, the conviction makes the heart bold, and so reacts on the physical system that you literally possess additional strength.

The moment you persuade a man that his life is good for nothing you perform a disastrous miracle and as certainly rob him of energy as the shorn locks of Samson changed him from a giant to a pigmy.

A theory of religion which begins with depressing your ambition and your consciousness of power is sure to end by depriving you of the ability to live nobly. But the simple and fascinating and uplifting religion of Christ, which constantly whispers, "I will be with you unto the end of the world," and, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," and yet, "Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father's notice," and, "Come unto Me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"—that religion is the unclouded sunshine of every day and the glory of every starlit night. There is not only hope in it, but continual joy, and not only joy, but a mysterious something which paints a rainbow on your griefs and sings a song of triumph over the grave.

Christ is the most encouraging preacher of whom history bears record. What more sublime or stirring picture can be found than that which tells of a God who will leave the ninety-and-nine who are well

housed, and roam over the bleak hills in search of the poor homeless creature who has rendered himself homeless by some fault of his own? No, we know nothing about Christianity as yet. It is still an unexplained miracle of revelation. We have a theological belief in God, but it is confusing and perplexing. What we need is that kind of a glimpse of Him which the babe has of its mother when she bends over it with the glow of love in her face and so draws the child that it throws its arms about her neck, not for protection, but in response to the heart's deepest emotions.

Life's journey will lead you over the mountaintops of ecstasy and happiness and through the valley of defeat and misery. Our years bring us strange experiences, many of which seem to involve unfairness and injustice on the part of Providence. There is hard work to be done, there are burdens to be borne, there are afflictions to be endured. No one is wholly content or can expect to be on this side of eternity. I think the Lord understands why in our ignorance we should on occasions feel even bitterly toward Him, and I know that a great deal of patience is required on His part to bear with our

wrongdoing and our complaints. If He were not patient the world would have come to an end long ago. This is a fact not to be forgotten.

Let us search for the truth of the matter, for truth is the concert pitch of the music of the spheres. And that truth is that the one great desire of God is that we shall so use our lives that we shall feel at home when we get to heaven. In the accomplishment of that purpose—I say it with reverence—He has made great sacrifices. It is His wish that your soul shall be disciplined, developed, ripened, sweetened, by whatever happens to you, and you cannot doubt that unseen agencies are round about you to give you help when help is needed and to give you good cheer always. You are not alone in your struggles, nor yet in your defeats. The angels of heaven are never far away. They are with you in your trials, but hidden from view, for if you were to see them it would be no longer possible to live.

With this holy faith in your heart you will become a new being. Your fears and doubts are like the slender cords with which the dwarfs pinned Gulliver to the ground and held him captive. But faith is to the soul what the ozone of the mountain-sum-

mit is to the body. It stimulates, it rouses enthusiasm, it renews your youth, it keeps you young until that last day when you fall asleep with a pleasant good-night on your lips, to be wakened by the welcoming good-morning of the angels.

EASTER MORNING

I ascend unto my Father, and your Father.—St. John
xx., 17.

AT this solemn season of the year our thoughts take on the wings of the eagle and dwell for a time in the upper air. Life with its carking cares dwindles until it becomes a dream, while immortality becomes the stalwart and magnificent fact in our consciousness.

As the great sun in his lordly march through space drives all mists before him, showering his creative energy on the cold earth until it grows warm under abundant crops and fragrant flowers, so shines the glory of heaven on our troubled souls, leaving therein a peace that passeth understanding and a faith that looks hopefully forward through eyes bedimmed with tears.

One can bear hardship with something like cheerfulness if he can hear the distant chimes which will usher in a period of respite and rest. Faith in the

other life seems necessary to any high accomplishment in this life. If death is a bolted door, we weep unceasingly until memory gives way to partial forgetfulness ; but if it is an open gate through which come the echoing voices of the departed, we not only long for them, but long to be with them. When the angels cried, " He is risen!" the world stood still in wonder, and every generation since has placed flowers on its graves.

As for me, the other life is a clear and distinct fact. I have more faith in it than I have in this life, and, thus believing, I must, of course, regard it as altogether preferable to this life. If either the present or the future is a dream, then I am sure that I am dreaming now and that the grand reality is to come.

To feel that there is a fire in me which is simply smouldering during my earthly years because of my bodily limitations, but which will break into an unrestrained blaze when death, the great hypnotist, shall put my physical system to sleep—that feeling forces me to look forward with high anticipations. I may be amazed as I contemplate this truth, but my amazement gives place to plans which outreach the narrow boundaries of time. The soul pulses

with pride at thought of its greatness and its destiny, and must live in accordance with them. My body is the hut in which something divine is dwelling. This hut is convenient and comfortable, and is well enough for its purpose. I thoroughly enjoy my residence, for the forests and plains and oceans and clouds are all beautiful. And yet within my inner self I know that the hut will soon be too small for occupancy. The storms have already worked such havoc with roof and walls that I can see the day approaching when it will fall to pieces. But I shall not crumble. This longing, aspiring something which I call myself cares very little what becomes of the hut. It is no concern of mine. I can see the law of nature at its work with this task of slow destruction, but why should it disturb me? And when that hut is no longer habitable, when it becomes unable to afford me shelter, I shall pack my few belongings, those that I can carry with me, and with a twofold feeling of sadness and gladness, and with a parting hand-shake for my neighbors, I shall enter the mansion not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The transfer from one home to the other will be the simplest and most natural thing in the world.

Sometimes I wonder what great purpose this present life subserves, but the other life seems consistent with the omnipotence and loving kindness of the Father. I am puzzled by strange experiences. I do not know what they mean and cannot guess. I ask myself why some people laugh who ought apparently to cry, and why others cry who ought to laugh. But when I think of the future, with its broad expanse of opportunity, of the spirit with powers which can develop indefinitely, of this pigmy soul which in some other world will grow to be a giant, I am certain that what puzzle me now, these curious inconsistencies and seeming injustices, must be contributory to the education of man and are a necessary stepping-stone to higher things.

But there is something more. When Jesus came to this earth did He come alone? That is unthinkable. Was there no interest in heaven in the work He was about to achieve, and was He unaccompanied? That would be the strangest incident in the history of the two worlds which He was to bring into closer relations with each other. Indeed, if the record is true, there were legions of angels who watched the progress of events with increasing soli-

citude. He knew they were there, though the blind eyes of His followers could not detect their presence, and on more than one occasion He leaned on them for sympathetic support.

And when He left as a legacy to the faithful man the promise that He and the Father would "come unto him and make our abode with him" is it supposable that no angels would leave the heavenly precincts to succor the distressed and lighten our burdens? I think not. The host of the departed, those whom we have loved but not lost, are as close to humanity now as in the olden days. All heaven is round about us, ministering to our wants, cheering us in our discouragement and leading us with invisible hands. If only our eyes could be opened we should see wondrous things. But it is better that we should not see too clearly—that we walk for a time not by sight, but by faith.

This Easter morn is radiant with the sunshine that warms the soul. Our dear ones wait on the other shore. It is Easter morning with them also. When the hour arrives and we are made free we shall rejoice with exceeding joy. In the meantime, patience to bear and courage to do!

ONE DAY AT A TIME

Sufficient unto the day.—St. Matthew vi., 34.

LIFE is made up of innumerable “present moments,” and if you attend to the duty or bear the burden of each one as it comes, without borrowing trouble from either the past or the future, you are in the best possible spiritual condition.

We needlessly add to our load the memory of outlived sorrows or the anticipation of sorrows to come, and make life harder to bear.

When Jesus declared that “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” He proclaimed a philosophy of well-being which after fifty generations of continuous progress we still fail to comprehend.

We have discovered almost everything else, but do not even yet know how to live at our best or to make the most of our circumstances. We can make preparations to go to heaven, but do not know how to bring heaven down to our earthly homes. And

yet that is the chief object which true religion has in view.

When you see at a distance the evils which threaten and which will come upon you next week or next month, your imagination gives them the proportions of giants. If you lay aside all thought of them and simply live in each day, doing each day's duty and bearing each day's burden as cheerfully as possible, you would find, when these dreaded evils come, either that you are stronger than you thought to bear them or that they are smaller than you expected them to be.

It sometimes happens when you are travelling along a country road that there is what seems to be a very steep, an almost impossible hill half a mile ahead. But when you are close to it you discover that the road has only a slight inclination after all, and that by some law of optical illusion the road looked as though it was almost perpendicular. So, brooding over an evil or dreading it for any length of time always enlarges it. The same thing happens that made the country road seem steeper than it was, and you regard endurance as impossible. But when you are in the midst of the experience it

is not as severe as you thought it would be, or else your shoulders have been mysteriously broadened and you are able to bear it without serious difficulty.

It is a very severe injunction to give no thought to the morrow, but to let the morrow take care of itself while you live happily in the present day. I confess to being greatly puzzled by it. I have not yet reached the spiritual altitude at which obedience to that injunction seems even a possibility. Nevertheless, I am sure that under it is an uncomprehended principle, the value of which the world will some time discover.

If we were really to believe that this is God's world and that we are God's children, if we could convince ourselves that there is a Providence in the affairs of life and that the statement that as our day is so shall our strength be is not a poetic fiction, but a practical fact, we could then enjoy a degree of repose to which we are now strangers.

And yet that is the only condition of mind which can truly be called religious. If you feel that everything is going wrong ; that it is impossible for you to set things right and useless to ask the Lord to do it, and that therefore you are in a very sorry plight,

there can be nothing in your heart that resembles religious feeling—no praise, or worship, or gratitude, or faith, or resignation. On the contrary, you are in open rebellion, and you and religion are not within sound of each other's voices.

Now, I do not ignore the hardships of life. I know too much about them to do that. They are real, they are serious, they are trying and perplexing. Still, I insist that it is neither prudent nor wise, and I am sure it is not conducive to health, to summon the regrets of the past like so many ghosts to haunt and frighten you, or to ponder the possibilities of the future until your present is shadowed and weakened. If what you have to do now is done cheerfully you will find yourself in good condition for to-morrow, whatever it may bring. That is practical and possible.

I am not praising a careless life, but am warning against needless anxiety. I believe a man should plan for his future, but he ought to live in his present. In going down-stairs you ought to give to each successive step its due amount of attention, for otherwise you may slip and fall. In living your life you must not ignore or despise any one day, but

must give to each its proper care. This one hour is yours, therefore fill it to the brim with fidelity. When the next hour comes do the same thing. It is a very simple rule, but it contains the very spirit and essence of religion.

Cultivate the happier side of your nature ; suppress the tendency to fret and complain.

Never for a moment imagine that because you are gloomy you are therefore pleasing to God.

He made the birds to sing, and you are to join in the chorus.

Get as much enjoyment out of life as you can, and see that you contribute to the enjoyment of others.

Make the world brighter because you are in it and because you have a warm heart and a generous hand.

Make the most of each passing moment, and when future moments come, bringing their sterner duties, you will be ready for them.

So long as God lives you will have no need to worry overmuch.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE

I have fought a good fight.—2 Timothy iv., 7.

A SOLDIER coming home! What memories he brings and what a welcome he receives! After the hardships of the tented field what joy to clasp the hands of dear ones and friends! The consciousness of duty well done sweetens the peace and rest which have been so nobly earned. The thunderous diapason of war becomes only an echo, and the heart is melted by the sweeter music of the mother's voice and the rejoicing of the household.

How like a human life is the going forth, and, best of all, the coming back! Our seventy years are also a battle-field on which great victories may be won, and when kindly Death beckons—Death is neither so stern nor so cruel as people think him, but rather a gentle friend who closes our eyes in sweet sleep from which angels wake us—he restores us, not to the old home, which has fallen into

decay and ruin, but to a home in the house not made with hands, in which the loved though not lost await our coming. Our welcome there will be more cordial than any that earth ever dreamed of, and after the first surprise is over we shall be as glad as the soldier who has been mustered out.

The points of resemblance between a life and a campaign are many and significant. They are worth considering.

When our soldiers enlisted they entered on a new and untried experience, and one which would by its various incidents put their mettle to its test. It was not a holiday, but a work-day, that lay before them. They were subjected to a severe discipline, but they knew that discipline was necessary to make them efficient. They bore it cheerfully, even when it was most rigid, for they saw the meaning of it. Victory was impossible without it, and although its hand was very heavy at times, it so equipped them that when the opportunity to do some deed of prowess was presented they were ready and able to make use of it.

It is the same with the soul that stands on the edge of a career which begins with birth and ends—

never. Life will try a man's mettle more severely than the trenches of Santiago. And it has victories whose laurel wreaths are as fadeless as eternity. We go forth with high imaginings of renown, for our youth is a beautiful dream, and with the illusive consciousness of strength which will bend the direst fate to our purpose. But the thoughtful learn ere long that there is a headquarters from which all commands proceed. There is discipline in life as in the army, and in both instances the object is the same, namely, to school the man, to show him that his commander-in-chief is law, a law which is beneficent when obeyed and inexorable when defied. That law does not interfere with his freedom to make a hero of himself, but rather furnishes him with additional courage and energy. It is only when the man knows more than his chief and chooses his own way at any hazard that the iron hand is laid on his shoulder. When the soldier is in accord with the spirit of the campaign he is in the proper mental attitude for the accomplishment of great deeds, and when the soul is in harmony with spiritual law neither death nor life nor principalities nor powers can throw it out of poise. The soldier must walk in

the shadow of his commander, the soul must rest in serene faith under the wing of the Almighty.

Again, there were many acts of personal heroism during the recent war which will never be known or applauded, more 's the pity. History attends only to the most salient and conspicuous details, and is just as apt to forget some as to remember others. There is in history a favoritism which seems to be the result of chance. Omniscience discovers a thousand glorious deeds which will never be recorded, and a thousand privates have been as brave and self-sacrificing as their officers, though no one but God is aware of the fact.

Is this not also true of life in time of peace? Are our real heroes and heroines all known? To the angels in heaven, yes; to men, no. There are women and men hidden under the shadow of oblivion whose merits will never be acknowledged in this world. They have struggled in the dark, with only the stars for witnesses. They have borne with patience the slings and arrows of adversity. They have knelt in uncomplaining resignation when overwhelmed by affliction. There are many martyrs' crowns of which we know nothing.

But there is no corner of the earth closed to the Lord. He knows all, sees all, and will reward all. No favoritism up yonder, and no neglect of what is due. For this reason we shall see and hear strange things when we reach the farther shore. There are nobles whom we never visit, to whom no hats are doffed on the street.

Once more. There is a going home after life's strange conflict. We are being mustered out one by one. A silent procession is marching day and night over the bridge which spans the abyss of death. Their arrival is watched for, and when the journey is over there will be a reunion too sweet for mortal man to conceive, for "eye hath not seen nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for those who love Him."

We have enlisted for the war. We are already in the midst of the fray. The victory is in the future, and it is a sure victory for the brave and loyal.

Be true to your noblest convictions with unswerving fidelity and neither life nor death can do you harm.

Be brave to meet your fortune, whatever it may

be, and you shall have the conscious companionship of the angels.

When the day's work is done and the setting sun gilds the western clouds you will be mustered out and sent home to your dear ones in heaven.

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

Whither wilt thou go?—Genesis xvi., 8.

I SUPPOSE that if I were to ask the first hundred people whom I met on the street this question, "What object have you chiefly in view in your life?" a large proportion of them would hesitate before answering. This hesitation would not come from the fact that because I was a stranger I had no right to put the intrusive question, but from the more significant fact that they did not themselves know what they were living for, or what they most of all desired to attain.

If we were merely birds of the air, or only lions or tigers in the world's great forests, we should not need to have any other aim than to find a secure resting-place for the night and to live in the sunshine all day. The bird has small use for reasoning power, because his unerring instinct makes it so pleasant to sail northward in summer and southward

in winter that he never fails to make the journey. God seems to have given him everything that he needs, and there is really nothing to ask for. So the lion has his jungle to roam in, a hunting preserve of which he is lord and master, and a cavern as a hiding-place when he is sleepy. He is entirely satisfied, is undisturbed by dreams of ambition and neither knows nor cares how the rest of creation is getting on. His limitations make perfect contentment possible.

But a man is a lion plus a good deal more. And it is that plus quantity in which consists his greatness. You and I have the nature of the animal, but we have something besides. When we see a man, and we sometimes do see such, who is a tiger in his business transactions, who takes everything within reach no matter to whom it belongs, who is satisfied if he is himself comfortable, but cares nothing for the comfort or the rights of others, we condemn him with the same quick impulse with which we throw a stone at a snake. This condemnation of what the man is is our unconscious tribute to what he might be and what he ought to be. The ideal life is in our thoughts all the time, and that is what puts a

bridgeless chasm between us and the brutes. There is a spark in us which has been taken from the altar of God. It is possible for us to be merely animals, and also gloriously possible to be archangels, yet archangels who work for wages, who weep over graves, who struggle with misfortune. The lion looks along a line parallel with the earth, but we look along a line that has a star at the other end of it.

The question, "What is your purpose in life?" is therefore a pertinent one. If you were to meet the captain of a noble vessel in mid-ocean and should hail him with your "Whither bound?" and he should answer, "I am not bound for any port, but am simply drifting," you would think him little less than a maniac. The real captain has chart, compass, and destination. It is his business to take the sun every day, to know what progress he is making, and what is the condition of his vessel.

All this is true of you and me also. It is a serious, a solemn, and a joyful privilege to live. Life may be a great mystery, but it is a great happiness. That at your birth you started on an eternal career is a fact that may stagger the intellect while it kin-

dles the profoundest gratitude of the heart. It is not for nothing that you were made, but for a glorious something. You are thrown upon a world in which laughter mingles with tears, and crime and virtue jostle each other at every turn, a world in which it seems hard to be good and easy to be bad, a world so capricious that it fosters a rich vice and neglects the heroism of the poor. But you are armed for the combat with qualities of character of such sturdy material that your soul will grow with every struggle as muscles grow by exercise. A very god you are, with hardships and temptations ahead of you. And in addition to your own strength you have the invisible angels for helpers in time of need, who never yet failed to heed your cry. They were with the Christ: they will be with you.

You are not only to live bravely or to live cheerfully, but to live grandly and nobly. Your purpose shall be to make your own days as comfortable as may be and to be a comfort to others also. The well-fed lion lies in the sun no matter if his brother lion starves. He does this because he is merely a lion. The man, however, rises from his soft couch and carries a part of his surplus to those who are

unhappy, and he does it because he is a son of God and a brother to all mankind.

Live with a purpose, and that purpose righteousness. Be strong in the strength of the Lord. Honor yourself by being honorable in all your dealings. Hate no man, but hate all meanness and cruelty and vice. Be broad and generous and charitable, but not too charitable to yourself. Keep heaven in sight, and then heavenly influences will surround you. Judge no man harshly, for you must yourself be judged some day. Hold your temper in a firm grip, for if it escapes it will do you an injury and cause regrets. Believe that above all is the dear providence of the Father, who will see to it that we have rest when the day's hard work is well over.

THE POSSIBLE MAN

For we are also His offspring.—Acts xvii., 28.

IF an electric current is passed through a bar of steel a very curious transformation takes place. The steel is no longer its simple self, but itself plus something which the electric current has left as an endowment. From that instant it has a power of attraction never before possessed, a new life, and is conscious of a close relation with that great body of electricity which fills the universe. The bit of metal which beforetime would have lain at its side in listless indifference is suddenly eager to attach itself to the bar, and the steel is drawn by sympathy to every scrap of iron on the planet. In our boyhood days we have all tried this interesting experiment and been surprised and delighted at the result.

Something of the same sort happened to the human soul when it came from the hand of God. The infinite finger-tips no sooner touched the raw ma-

terial out of which we were fashioned, the breath of our Maker no sooner entered our nostrils, than there was established an intimacy between the soul and its God, for when God had finished the task there was something left in the man which will forever draw him toward everything that is high and holy, and will not let him rest until he has reached his ideal. A certain appreciation of the heroic and noble thus became an irresistible element of our nature, and it asserts itself not only in those who have striven for righteousness, but also in those who have buried their best selves under the débris of passion and dissolute pleasure. The saint cries, "My God!" in the moment of peril, but not more eagerly than the poor creature who denies His existence. The atheist is as apt to do it as the Christian, for it is the voice of the natural man. There is enough of the divine in the most wretched wrecks among men to force this appeal from the lips in dire extremity.

There is a moiety of creative energy in us all. Though we seldom put it to use, we are conscious of its presence. Heaven and God are both in the heart of man, and reverence for the one and hope of the other can no more be extinguished than you can

put out a conflagration with a bucket of water. God is the Creator of the world; man is the creator of his own character. The angels will help him in his task and the Father will surround him with the divine influences which arouse spiritual ambition, but the work must be begun and continued by himself.

The animal is limited by the circumference of merely animal life, and nothing beyond that circumference can be expected. The perfect animal has fulfilled his mission. But the circumference of human nature is far beyond this. The soul works in a domain which includes the throne of the Eternal, and no man can achieve his full destiny until he becomes godlike. "Noblesse oblige" is an old phrase, which means that a man's origin decides his duties. Born to the throne, the king's son must be imperial in his conduct and allow no blot on his escutcheon. Born of the King of Righteousness, with the doors of heaven always open for the free access of his prayers, with hosts of angels interested in his failures and successes, the soul of man, endowed with the creative faculty, must keep its eyes fastened on everlasting truth, and labor to make itself ready to enter the Presence without a blemish. That is the

ideal, not to be realized perhaps in this lower sphere, but certainly to be realized sometime and somewhere.

Man the arbiter of his own destiny! Not able to exceed the limits of his natural capacity, but able to make himself perfect within those limits—a very king within his sphere, and held responsible by the Almighty for the honest use of his powers. He needs only to appreciate himself, the Creator behind him, the Throne far ahead of him, to be filled with that sublime ambition which achieves self-respect as well as success. His incoming into this world, his outgoing from this world at death, present such inspiring motives that evil cannot charm him while virtues entice. He cannot help being brave, bearing himself nobly in peril and storm, when he sees that God is solicitous for his welfare and all the angels that fill the heavens are ready to do him a service.

That is religion, the religion of the Christ. It is the robust religion that the world craves. Its creed is short—only love that soars to the stars, and love that lends a helping hand to the needy. It is a religion which will bear the stress and strain of fortune, urging us ever upward until our weary feet touch the golden threshold of eternity.

SIMPLE GOODNESS

Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good.—Acts x., 38.

I SAID to a very wise friend the other day that one of the discouragements of life is the lack of gratitude on the part of those whom you have helped, at perhaps considerable cost to yourself. I had a peculiarly exasperating instance in mind, wherein I had done a signal service and it had been received as a matter of course.

His reply rather startled me. If we are really of one family, he said, and God is our common Father, the poorest sufferer would have a divine right to call on us for assistance and an equal right to expect us to furnish it. Religion, however, is so little a reality, and so largely a dream, that we think ourselves peculiarly virtuous when we go out of our way to do a neighbor a good turn, and take credit for an act which ought to be regarded as a matter of course. In a better world than this, and in

this world when it becomes what the Christ sought to make it, any attempt to avoid lending a helping hand must be followed by pangs of self-reproach. In such a world selfishness is the very prince of darkness, the fertile source of all possible evils.

As to gratitude for your acts, you have nothing to do with it. If you get it you may take comfort to yourself, but if you fail to get it the quality of your act remains the same. You are Christ's servant and so bound to put your shoulder to a wheel that is mired whether you receive thanks or not. To expect gratitude as a kind of *quid pro quo* is to inject a commercial element into your life which is quite unworthy. A good action will stand alone in any part of the universe, and if men forget to thank you God will not.

Some men do right and keep the commandments with the hope of thereby getting to heaven. It is the principle of *quid pro quo* again, and is not to be tolerated. The right is the right, and though you were damned for doing it it would still be your duty. You have nothing to do with rewards or punishments, and the more largely they enter into your

calculation the lower the moral level you will occupy. Goodness is goodness, and the result it produces in the development of character, in sturdiness of manhood, in the fine mettle of honor and nobleness, is the only reward you can honestly look for. No man ever went to heaven without having a heavenly heart. His creed has nothing to do with his getting there. A thousand creeds will not save you unless there is something behind them. Not what you believe is of consequence, but your attitude toward whatever is good and true and noble. A good motive is far more effective spiritually than a good thought ; for you may have the thought but not the deed which is its natural result, whereas if you have the motive the deed will follow without being urged.

Practical religion requires you to show some reason why your life should be prolonged day by day. You owe the world a great deal more than it owes you. You are under a moral obligation to do something or to say something to some one of your fellow creatures before you have any right to ask for refreshing sleep. You have lost a day unless you have given your share of the impetus which drives

souls upward. Life which consists of breathing and eating and an enviable environment is the life of an animal ; it counts for nothing. The soul must be fed as well as the body, and it flourishes in health only when you love your kind and are ready to lift the load from the shoulders of friend or stranger without the hope of any other reward than the approval of God and the smile of the angels.

If you will, you can make your life grand in that way. Get for yourself and your family, but, as you get, give. The giving and not the getting is the main point. Close your eyes on no day without a kind word, a bit of advice, something which shall fall into the general treasury as a coin from the mint of heaven. That is chivalry; that is manliness; that is religion. Christ gave all, and such was His nature and mission that He could n't have given less ; but we can give a little, and that little will prove the foundation of a happiness which shall fill the present with peace and happiness and irradiate the future with the hope of a blessed immortality. A good deed is a bit of heaven, and the more good deeds the more of heaven. The love of self is cruelty to self ; the love of others is godlike. If you cross

the valley with your arms full of greed you will be a stranger in the new climate, but if you can carry with you a heart that has beat warmly for mankind you will find a generous welcome beyond the grave.

THINGS NOT WORTH WHILE

Thou hast sinned against thy soul.—Habakkuk ii., 10.

THE object of religion is to make life sweet and satisfactory. When a man has done the best he could under the circumstances he has done all that God requires of him. Heaven is not for those who believe things, but for those who do things. Christ was a working man in its largest and most divine sense, while we are all working men in a small sense. He worked for others, and was therefore divine; we work for ourselves, and are therefore pitifully human. His religion teaches us to become a part of the life of those who need our help; our tendency is to take from others for our own ease and comfort, and to give as little as possible. He emphasizes the value of the soul, gives it a dignity and a grandeur, the gait and bearing of a king; our philosophy of life minimizes spritual pleasures and magnifies what is sensuous.

I never tire of the New Testament, because it is such a desperately sensible book, and because it flatly contradicts the ideas which worldly society puts into my head. It is always new, therefore, and almost always startling. If the soul is what He tells me it is, then I must have a large plan. If I am really little lower than the angels, then I must cease to be childish, and the small cares of life must not be allowed to tease and fret me. In that case I should look life in the face and say to my soul that it must busy itself about great things and keep in mind that petty things are not worthy of attention.

For example, it is not worth while to be impatient because what happens is not to our liking. We are apt to make a hot reply when an ill-natured remark is made. Somebody else's bad mood excites a bad mood in us. We catch the disease instantly, and then there are two persons in a bad mood instead of one. Passion is heated to the exploding point, we give rein to our tongue, and a pitched battle of words takes place. We loosen the bonds of a friendship, we wound the heart of affection, for what we say is a consuming fire. If we had a perfect control of ourselves we should not be gunpowder to any

one's torch. A little patience, very difficult to attain, I admit, would keep us from striking when we are struck. It is noble to keep still, and the rebuke of silence is like a keen sword. It is not worth our while, not worth the soul's while, to step down to a lower level because some one addresses us from that level. We should maintain our dignity though others lose theirs.

Then, again, it is not becoming in a princely soul to allow the habit of fault-finding to get possession of it. It renders one uncomfortable, it unfits one for the enjoyments which cross our path, it dulls the edge of happiness, it is like eating a lemon instead of an orange. The man who finds fault with others seldom has time to find fault with himself, which is his chief duty. Instead of being charitable he is censorious. Not even the Lord can please him, and if he ever gets to heaven he will insist that things shall be arranged to suit his personal taste. Fault-finding is simply self-conceit in a subtle disguise. Such a man hints that the universe is wrong, but that he can put it right. It is not worth while to peer at the defects of others and to ignore their virtues. It is better to look for good things, because

you are sure to find them if you look long enough, than to look for bad things and then waste your time in grumbling because they are bad. If God were dethroned such a man would try to take His place ; but since God reigns it would be well for the fault-finder to retire to the background and try to be thankful for mercies received, rather than criticise the Almighty for not giving him what he thinks he ought to have.

Once more, it is not worth your while to look on the dark side of life, for that destroys your power of resistance and endurance. There is sometimes a hard side to God's providence, but never a dark side. He does undoubtedly ask us to do some strange things, and to go through some strange experiences; but if He goes with us we are not only in good company, but are sure to derive some benefit from it all. Strong characters are wrought by tears, and afflictions are stepping-stones to heaven if we view them from the right standpoint and put them to their proper use. Life is not all gladness, but sadness is the hot fire in which the Toledo blade is forged. We may not always know why we suffer, for no explanation has ever been given, but some-

how or other the suffering souls are always the noblest, provided they suffer under the shadow of God's sympathy. To be unconscious of His presence makes life very heavy and leaden, but to be conscious of it is like catching a glimpse of the distant home when the weary traveller is ready to drop by the wayside.

Yes, a soul, an immortal soul, with heaven and heavenly beings all about, is a magnificent mystery. It must live up to its destiny, and put under its feet the fears and doubts which are so intrusive and so persistent. Think of yourself as God's child, to whom no real harm can possibly come, and the clouds will part and your depression will be lightened. There are still stars overhead, and a blue sky. It will be all right by and by. In the meantime be patient, and, above all, keep your faith bright and pure.

TWO BODIES

There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.—
1 Corinthians xv., 44.

WHILE enjoying a brief sojourn in Europe it was my privilege to have an interview with Max Nordau. I was curious to look into the face of the man who had the audacity to write the word “degeneration” on the page of history—a word, however, which the spirit of progress immediately erased, for one must eliminate God from the universe before he can play the dirge of despair.

Considering my profession, it was natural that the conversation should grope its way to the subject of personal immortality. When I find a delver into the problems which form the basis of stanch faith or sturdy doubt I like nothing more than a candid relation of his reasons for belief or unbelief.

While my friend was engaged in the serious task of proving that the grave is the inevitable terminus

of life's devious pathway and brushing immortality away as an interfering and intrusive cobweb, Père Hyacinthe was announced. Then I witnessed a battle royal between two well-armed knights, both of whom had the courage of their convictions, and neither of whom lacked the ability to defend his position. For sixty minutes the conflict raged with shot and shell of logic and rhetoric and facts. It was a spectacle which those who saw it will not easily forget. As I looked and listened it seemed to me that I could see the dim figure of the Christ in the shadowy background of that room, and could hear a still, small voice whispering : " In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." The question which was being so eloquently discussed assumed a practical aspect in my mind, and I said to myself, " Which of these two scholars offers his fellows the larger incentive, and which of these theories will better serve as a foundation on which to build a noble character?"—for, after all has been said on both sides, we have just one criterion of judgment—namely, the practical results produced by the ideas advanced. When we

test ideas in that way we can definitely appraise their value. If a man offers us a new theory of political economy or of mechanics he must put it to the proof in practice. Let him show us that it will work well, that it will do away with existing evils and increase human happiness, and then, but not till then, will we honor him while living and keep him in grateful remembrance when dead.

No religion is worth a second thought which has not earned a right to our respect by producing holy lives. Theology is for scholars; Christ is for all men. A volume in which speculative religion is discussed has no value in comparison with even the humblest life which illustrates the power of faith to transfigure the soul. If my religion makes me self-denying and sweetly resigned to whatever ills befall, and your doubt fails to produce equal results, I am not rash in asserting that what I believe is better than what you do not believe, and is much more likely to be true.

So I sat in that room listening to the two speakers and at the same time thinking of something else. I went back to that solemn hour when I sat by a dying father's side. Was it all an illusion—his promise

to meet me on the farther shore, his assurance that death was merely a retirement from mortal sight? No man ever closed his eyes more willingly in sleep than he, and none ever felt more sure of waking in the dawn of an eternal morning. When one can greet death with a smile and feel that the grim messenger is doing him a friendly service there must be a solid basis for his faith or this world is the worst of all places to live in. The religion which compels virtue and develops the grander qualities of character and puts a wreath of forget-me-nots on the grave is certainly to be prized. If it is false, unfounded, a mere hallucination, then the sooner we abolish Deity the better, for He has made us with unspeakable wisdom and furnished the soul with exquisite cruelty.

And I wondered, as I sat there, what the effect would be if the sceptic were endowed with omnipotence and should sweep away our faith in immortality with his besom of destruction. Above every home is heaven. What it is, or where it is, we may not know until our feet press its green sod; but that there is a heaven and that we are journeying in that direction, and that the missing members of the

household await us there, yes, that we are guarded and guided and protected by the loved ones who dwell in that unseen and partially unknown world—this faith is as necessary as sunshine is to the crops and the flowers. A world in doubt is a world in darkness.

You believe in honesty, and you have a right to be proud of the struggles you have passed through and still retained it. You believe in that brotherly charity which ministers to the unfortunate, and on that feeling our asylums and hospitals are built. You believe in a quiet and uncomplaining resignation under affliction as a lofty level which every soul should strive to attain. You believe in an intrepid manhood and a pure womanhood, to be maintained at any cost. Well, make your arch out of these blocks of Parian marble, and when your work is nearly finished you will find that the only keystone which will fit its place and keep the structure firm is a faith that human beings have so much to do that immortality alone can satisfy the soul's demands. No life was ever yet completed on this earth. Therefore Christ said, "I go to prepare a place for you."

NOBLE LIVING

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?—St. Matthew vii., 16.

THIS is not the only utterance in which Christ emphasized the value of a good life. It is as easy to see that He regarded honor, integrity, charity, and courage to be the chief characteristics of the ideal man as to see which way the current flows when you stand on the river's bank. His revelations were made for the purpose of teaching us how to produce the best practical results, just as the farmer would tell his son that he must clear the ground of stones, must plough, harrow, sow seed, and watch the growth of weeds if he expects to reap a harvest for his granary and barns.

I suspect I am something of a fanatic on this subject, for I think the man who puts himself to some trouble to give a cup of cold water to a thirsty child, and does it because he and that child are the off-

spring of the same Father, is better off morally and spiritually than the man who accepts the whole Nicene Creed, but drinks the water himself. In other words, the liberty of belief is very large and wide, but the necessity of right action is to the last degree imperative. If your belief helps you to be gracious and kindly and gentle, then your belief is to be cherished as a mother cherishes her little one ; but if you think to use this world for your own benefit only and expect your creed to carry you through the gate of heaven and into the approval of the Almighty, you will find out your mistake by and by. When I reach the other world and am examined as to my past I would rather take the hand of some poor creature whom, with great pains, I saved from starvation or drink or some crime, and say, " I could not do much, dear Lord, for the time was short and the work was hard, but this brother of mine was going the wrong way and I persuaded him to turn his face to Thee," than to offer any other conceivable reason why I should be accepted with favor in that upper home.

When we think of Christ in a large way, what fact impresses us, subdues us, forces us to fall at His

feet and touch the hem of His garment? Is it not that He lived as He taught us to live? In the single sentence, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," His whole career is summed up. He did what God wanted Him to do. The Father's purpose was His purpose, and He knew no other purpose. In order to accomplish it He was carried over the hills of Judea in the garb and the poverty of a peasant, under the hospitable roof of Bethany, into the shadow of Gethsemane, and along the rugged slope of Calvary, but in every experience He kept the one end in view. At what cost the world will never know, but there was a straight path from Bethlehem to heaven, and He walked in it with unfaltering step. His doctrine was comprised in love toward and confidence in God at all times and under all circumstances, and His one demand of us is that we shall "go and do likewise."

If a man does the works of Christ he will be with Him in the hereafter. There will be no other place than heaven in which to assign him a residence. If He told us to judge our fellows by their fruits, then it is logical to suppose that He will judge us by the same standard. Christ cannot have one cri-

terion in this world and another criterion in any other world. This simplifies the Gospel and makes everything plain. There may be metaphysical problems which I cannot understand, and if so I shall not be held accountable for refusing to accept them, but the marvellous teachings of the Master as to my conduct of life are all within the reach of my comprehension, and if I obey them and do the best I can with what comes to me I shall cross the threshold without a tremor, admitting my unworthiness, but sure of my great reward.

I must be true to myself and to my fellow man, and then I shall be true to God. I must be honest even when honesty requires a sacrifice, and when the temptation is wildly stimulating, because in the long run honesty ennobles and dishonesty degrades. The world is made that way, and it is safer to obey than defy the law.

Every man should think for himself on this subject, but as for me, the quality of my mind is such that I minimize the value of mere doctrine as an element of salvation, and lay great stress, possibly too great, on the worth of a life which is noble, pure, and self-sacrificing. I have no quarrel with the Catholics,

who delight in a rich and impressive form of worship, nor with the various Protestant sects which lay so much stress on creed. If ceremonies are helpful to you and you are at home under their sweet influence, by all means join the Church which offers them in rare abundance. If dogma furnishes you with an agreeable shelter, by all means go to the Church which satisfies your mental craving. God has made us to look on life from different standpoints, so let each man take his position where he will and look toward God and the Christ in his own way. If any man has a faith which satisfies him, I would not change it to my own faith for worlds.

But there are untold millions outside of all churches. They cannot accept all that is taught, but they hunger for something to cling to for life and death. To these I present the simplicity of Christ. I tell them that the Gospels contain the secret of usefulness, of a comforting conscience; that the religion of honesty, of purity, of charity, and love is the religion which the Master taught, and is the only basis, absolutely the only basis, on which to build a worthy character. I am sure that the whole world wants to believe more than it now

sees its way clear to accept, and if I can lift a single one out of his despair and stand him on the Sermon on the Mount, make him a moral man, he will soon grow to be a noble man, and I have perfect confidence that the Christ will bless him. He who loves honor and integrity will find himself at the feet of Him who declared that love of God and man is the prime law of a true religion.

A LARGER FAITH

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.—
St. John xiv., 27.

THE essence of religion is always the same, but theology is subject to constant change.

Honesty, fidelity, kindliness, and love are to-day just what they were to the newly born souls in the Garden of Eden; and resignation, self-sacrifice, faith in God are just what they were in the Garden of Gethsemane. Time has not altered their complexion. neither has it decreased our appreciation of them. They are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Human hearts are what they have always been, but human minds are constantly passing from lower to higher levels of truth, climbing the spiral staircase of greater knowledge, and looking out on a wider horizon.

In nothing is this made more clear than in the soul's relation to God. Our fathers feared Him, but we have learned to love Him. They trembled

in His presence, while we rejoice. Their religion was like a sky filled with thunder-heads, every now and then a flash of forked lightning shaking the earth with its menace, awful in grandeur, magnificent as an exhibition of power; but rousing a fear for the present and the future which deadened affection. There was a dirge-like element in it which was strangely unattractive.

We admire our fathers for their sterling and stern qualities of character, but it would be impossible for us to kneel by their side and worship the God they so reverently adored. Time has wrought beneficent changes in our spiritual outlook, and what we believe is incomparably more inspiring than anything their theology could furnish. There is something more friendly, more fatherly, more motherly in our conception of Deity, and therefore it is nearer to the truth.

There are two matters in which we have made a decided advance. We have changed the doctrine of total depravity into a belief in our sonship with God. No funeral procession ever moved more willingly to the cemetery where lie our buried errors than we did when we paid our last respects to that dogma. The

world was frightened by it while it reigned, and one dared not look toward heaven without expecting to hear the thunders of gloomy Sinai. We were simply a multitude of shipwrecked mariners, whose only deserts were to sink beneath the waves. But light came. The Gospel broke through the clouds on a second reading and shone with inspiring effulgence. Children and heirs! Loved of the Father with a love not to be expressed! We woke to a new life. Fear fled, and we were drawn upward with a strange feeling that God's invisible hand was downstretched to lift us over our sorrows and sins into penitence and holiness. The heavens were filled with music, and we began the upward march with joy in our hearts. Love flooded the world and wrought a miracle of development and growth. Religion became a perpetual peace and hope and trust, for a year of love will do more for the soul than a cycle of fear. The earth blossomed anew, and as the Christ cried, "Let there be light!" we bent in a reverent worship never known before. The Bible has become a fresh revelation, and the universal heart is warmed to good deeds and noble endeavor by the consciousness that the Father wants us and

we must find our way to the home which awaits us.

And the second change in our thoughts is our conception of the other life. The picturesque and spectacular in the old theology have given way to an immortality which robs death of its black garments and gives it a white robe instead. The harps in the early picture have disappeared, and we look forward to a life of activity; a life in which our affections are left intact; a life so close to God that we shall grow as the wheat grows in the sunshine and dew, and so close to earth that along the well-trodden highway we may bring back the sweet influences of the upper world to bless this one withal. There is no high barrier whose gates are bolted, but an open door through which the thoughts of the living may travel upward, and through which the glories of the other life may come to flood our human households with helpfulness.

These beliefs are golden. They are priceless. We live anew, we breathe a purer air, and enjoy a larger faith. Our vision takes a wider view, as one who climbs from the narrow valley to the mountain-top. Religion becomes a diviner reality than ever.

It is easier to bear with resignation the ills of the flesh, for the spirit is unconfined, and soars in its sorrow to the source of all strength and wisdom. The Father was never so near to His children as now, and life was never so radiant or so glorious. We have at last looked into the face of the risen Lord, and read His word with lips that have been touched by angel fingers. We can do our work with good cheer, can bow in deeper reverence, and bear with patience, for voices are calling us which we have never heard before, and beyond the tomb is the light of another and a brighter day.

STRONG IN THE LORD

O man greatly beloved, fear not ; peace be unto thee ; be strong, yea, be strong.—Daniel x., 19.

SUPPOSE we spend a few moments in a careful examination of your life, just as we would examine a watch that does not work quite well.

My life or any one's else would serve the purpose just as well, for human nature is the same the wide world over. Any one unit is like all the other units in the vast aggregate, but your personal life has a large interest for you, and it may do us all good to take a quiet but critical look at it. If we can discover what the matter is, we may perhaps learn how to take the hair out of the watch.

You are disappointed in yourself. Who is not? You have achieved so much less than you hoped to do, and your qualities of character are so different from what they might be, that you are rather disconsolate. Again, who of us is not in the same state of mind from the same causes?

Now, let me lay down a general principle, for that may clear the way to an investigation which will produce a remedy, as an apple blossom produces an apple.

People who are learned in psychology tell us that a condition of mind results in a condition of body. Some emotions will even produce disease, and others are conducive of health. Your thoughts will produce a chemical change in your physical system. Some thoughts will act on the nerve centres in such a way as to make you strong, while others will make you weak. The man who is submerged in despair is like a man submerged in water—he is drowning. He who, on the contrary, is buoyant and hopeful can work hard and enjoy it. You must be careful, therefore, about the kind of thoughts you entertain, because thoughts may be either poisonous or nutritive.

Now, then, what are your dominant thoughts? That is the all-important question. Do you believe that you can make a great deal out of your life if you know how to handle it, or do you rather feel that there is not raw material enough in your surroundings to make a strong character or success?

Is God a dreamy myth, a cloudy nothing which you have inherited, and on which you have never placed much value, or is He a spiritually tangible presence, to be daily consulted and trusted as you trust and consult your best friend?

If the former, we have made a sad discovery—namely, that you have no religious faith at all and you have been deceiving yourself all your lifetime. You may go to church or be a church member, but the plain truth is that your religion is simply an opiate to dull your pains in the experiences of life, whereas it ought to be the sunshine on flowers, the dew or shower on the wheat-field.

You are like a ship sailing in a dense fog. Your compass is broken, and there are shoals all about you. I think the difference between a genuine faith and a make-believe faith in its effect on your ability to cope with hardship is the difference between the heart of a giant and that of a child.

If Christ could have entertained a doubt of His Father's love and wisdom He never would have gone through Gethsemane or the agony of the cross. A simple drop of that kind of poison and we should never have had a Christian Church.

Your life is a sacred possession, and all its experiences, it matters not what they are, can be made to contribute to a noble character. It is hard to believe this at times, but it is true, and you will become your grander self the moment you recognize that fact.

Take your lot in life as a means of spiritual development, and you will soon find yourself growing in grace. Do not allow events, however difficult to bear or to manage, to sour your soul, for acidity is weakness, and sweetness is strength.

Never worry if it can possibly be helped, for worry means degeneration. Keep yourself calm and reposeful, for God is not only overhead, but in your daily work, though it be daily drudgery.

If there is trouble in your home and you feel hampered and fettered, like a bird whose wings have been cut, simply try to get out of your narrow life all it is capable of yielding. Things may not seem to be all right now, but they certainly will be all right by and by.

I know that I am telling you about a very hard truth, but in spite of its hardness it is the truth. If things are bad, they are made worse by brooding

over them, and they can be made better by facing them in the proper spirit.

In my opinion that is religion. That is what the Christ came to teach us. He was quiet, and so can we be. I do not ask you to be wholly contented, because there are longings in the soul which cannot be repressed, and I am not sure that it would be well to repress them; but I ask you to be strong. Keep your dreams and find happiness in them, but live your life bravely, grandly, nobly. Live it as a great, an immortal soul should live it, trusting in that hand which rules the universe and in that Lord who notes the sparrow's fall.

In good time, on the other shore, you shall have your heart's desire, and it will be your blessed privilege to know that you have earned a right to it by patience and calm, uncomplaining, and heroic endurance.

A SIMPLE FAITH

Ye believe in God, believe also in me.—St. John xiv., 1.

WHAT is absolutely essential in religion, so far as doctrine is concerned, is very little and very simple. The Church has for a long time had a strange notion that in order to be saved a man must believe a long list of dogmas, whereas the only condition imposed by the Christ is that a man shall have a heart and a life full of a love which lifts some one's burden whenever the chance occurs, and seek the strength to do it from Him who is Father to all alike.

There is this difference between what is called "a body of doctrine" and a spiritual principle, namely, that not everybody can either understand or accept the doctrine, while no man is so unlettered or so obtuse that he need fail to do what is right because he is in doubt about it. The road to heaven is not a tangled maze of statement about Christ or God,

but a straight and open path from the trusting human heart to the immortal life, a path in which the little child and the grave philosopher may hand in hand wend their way with equal pleasure and profit.

You need corner-stones if you erect a building, and for a like reason you need certain beliefs if you make for yourself a character. Faith in a God who will never desert you stands first. It must be an unflinching faith, however, or it will give way in the time of emergency. You begin well when you begin with that, and you begin ill if you begin in any other fashion.

I have a queer suspicion that the general faith in the ability or willingness of God to see us safely through all earthly experience is clouded by more or less doubt. It is a matter which we keep to ourselves, but deep down in the heart is a wonder whether this beautiful something which we call religion can be relied upon as firmly, for instance, as the sea captain relies on his compass in a storm. Hence the despair which we find when death comes into the house, and hence our weakness when a bold and insolent temptation assails us. We are not thoroughly convinced, and, though we hope that

God is there and does hear us when we cry, we have a doubt which seizes us like a sudden throb of agony.

That is not religion; it is only the simulation of it. It is a staff of willow, not a staff of oak. It serves in good weather, but in the tempest it fails us. When Davy invented his wire-gauze lamp as a protection against the explosive fire-damp in mines the workmen looked at it and shook their heads. It was too simple to be worth much. But Davy had faith in his lamp. He lighted the candle, went into the bowels of the earth, sought the spot where fire-damp lay in ambush, and exposed himself to the danger. He had not only a theory, but a conviction. He would trust his life to it. No test could be too severe. He felt absolutely safe with that lantern in his hand. That is the kind of faith we want if our lives are to become heroic. And when we are possessed of it we have something else besides. Faith in God produces faith that our earthly experiences are our discipline and our preparation. The moment you see God as your Father duty becomes not only clear and distinct, but easy. Alone you can bear but little, but with the infinite reservoir of power

and love to draw from you are equal to whatever your position may be. If God is with you, then the angels who do His bidding will be your companions. You become one of the great family and will be consciously helped by unseen hands over the rough places. And this consciousness will grow clearer as your faith increases, until in the end there will be only a thin veil between you and the other world. You will live in the friendship of the departed as you live in that of the dear ones in your household. The Christ realized this, but we are yet dull of hearing and dim of sight.

Immortality will become not a vague hope or even a reasonable belief, but a demonstrable certainty, and you will live in the two worlds at the same time. Your last hour will find you with a smile on your lips and a great gladness in your heart. You will eagerly step out of a tired body to be welcomed by those who await your coming.

That is the kind of religion which men long for, and which they will have when they wake up from this half-belief and this make-believe to a realization of the glorious truth. It was Christ's religion, and it is our own fault if we do not make it ours.

GOD OUR STRENGTH

I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.—Psalms xliii., 5.

THE central thought of religion is the continual presence of God in the soul, and therefore the moral compulsion of the soul to be godlike.

We are not members of God's family by adoption, but by right of birth, and duty consists in bearing ourselves as such. The ideal man, when he arrives, will be so proud of his relation to the universe and prize it so highly that low thinking and low acting will become impossible. His genealogy will be so impressive that it will influence his motives, his entire outlook on life, and shape his character after the model of his divine ancestry.

We have temporarily fallen away from any hope of reaching this high estate, and wandered into all sorts of evils and diseases, for disease is the natural and logical result of moral obliquity. If the race had persistently maintained its obedience to law it

would be as healthy in body as sound in mind. The ailments of the body, which consume so much of our patience and time, are all abnormal. They have their origin either in wilfulness or ignorance; and if knowledge were substituted for ignorance, and obedience to law were substituted for wilfulness, the remedial effect would be such that in a few generations we should be as whole and healthy as was Adam in the Garden of Eden.

The Christ was physically perfect, and it is inconceivable that He should have been otherwise. We find it impossible to associate disease with the thought of Him. He was not only whole and hale Himself, but He imparted wholeness to others, and, when questioned on the matter, simply replied: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." When from this single utterance we weave a philosophy of life it becomes clear that if we start in good physical condition and keep ourselves mentally and spiritually in harmony with God's plan we shall remain in that condition all our days and die of old age as quietly as a child goes to sleep in its mother's arms.

That God ordained disease is not to be thought of. Heaven is a place of health, and earth not only

ought to be, but will be, when our lives are "hid with Christ in God." That is the great requisite, and until that consummation is reached our suffering must needs continue to warn us that "out of harmony" means "out of health."

Worry, for example, disturbs all the functions of the body. Constant anxiety is the mental cause of a physical effect. Happiness and a fretful temper, a sweet contentment and the habit of continual fault-finding, serenity of heart and a persistent critical mood can no more mingle than oil and water. They are foreign to each other and will not live in the same house. You cannot have both, and must, therefore, make your choice.

The Christ had a daily life full of impediments to spiritual growth. He endured hardships, neglect, disloyalty, and suspicion. But His mind was with God. He lived in the upper world, in communion with the hosts of heaven, and all such trials were trivial and petty. They could not conquer Him as they conquer us, for His heart was right, while ours is wrong. He did God's will and found therein a divine satisfaction, while we insist on having our own way and so make ourselves miserable.

The ills of life are doubly burdensome when we brood over them. The joys of life are blurred by the shadow of anxiety which we throw upon them. If we could be made to believe that God knows how to rule the universe and would quietly live from day to day, refusing to suffer from the sorrows we anticipate, many of which never arrive and nearly all of which we exaggerate, our pulses would beat more regularly, the clouds would have a silver lining, and the sunshine would be more genial. We make things harder to bear by dwelling on their hardness.

I do not say there are no sorrows, no sighs, or tears, but I do say there is a God. I know we are sometimes worn and weary, but a common-sense religion puts all the cheerfulness into life it will hold, and the heart that trusts is better fitted to do good work than the heart that doubts. Struggle is robbed of its sting when we have the companionship of angels and know that unseen hands are lifting us over the rough places.

There is nothing under the stars so helpful, so encouraging, so healthful, as a religion which tells us that we are in the Father's keeping, and that we are travelling a rough road toward an eternal home.

THE BEAUTY OF THE HEART

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.—
Psalms xc., 17.

WE are all lovers of the beautiful, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. A magnificent landscape is always impressive, and I have known persons to talk in whispers, without knowing that they did so, while looking at it. It is said of the Swiss that they are of a melancholy temperament because the huge mountains amid which they live are too much for them. They are, as it were, hypnotized by them, and strange influences steal into their souls.

There is another kind of beauty which kindles our enthusiasm—the beauty of a human face. But there is this difference between nature and human nature, namely, that the beauty of the one is the work of God, while that of the other is the work of man. Real beauty of countenance does not consist

in regularity of outline, but in expression, and is therefore dependent on character.

It would be impossible, for example, to picture the Christ as other than attractive in feature. To depict Him with a countenance which indicated selfishness or cunning would be an insult to the law that never allows an ignoble expression to symbolize a noble heart and life. The face of Christ is the despair of artists because it is difficult to paint a portrait in which a child's gentleness is conjoined with a giant's strength. The face of Napoleon or Cæsar or Peter or Paul can be shown on canvas, but the painter's brush that tries to portray a face at once tender and stern, pitiful and scornful, woman-like on one side and heroic on the other, will find its task an impossible one. Christ's face, therefore, is for our dreams but not for our colors. We can conceive of it, but it cannot be represented.

It is not feature or contour or complexion which constitutes beauty. It is transfiguration. At the first look at a man's face we receive an impulsive impression. At the second look we get a glimpse of his attributes, his peculiarities, his inner self, and it is this second look which decides whether the man

is good- or ill-looking. The woman who resorts to cosmetics is simply trying to pass a counterfeit bill, and will sooner or later be found out; but she who trusts to her good will for all, her sympathy for suffering, her general kindliness, has her hand full of gold coins which everybody wants and appreciates.

If we look at others with love in our eyes our love is so transforming that our face must needs seem beautiful. When a sailor passes a lighthouse on a stormy night he sees the light and thanks God for it. The blazing lamp covers up any defect in the structure of the building. He knows nothing, sees nothing except that light. In like manner there is a radiance in the human face when the heart has communed with heavenly things which makes us forget such unimportant details as complexion and hair and features. We ignore the lighthouse structure and see only the light. It is not so much architecture as character which takes hold upon us. It is possible to be repelled by the person who has an artistically perfect face, but who on closer inspection wears lines of selfishness or petulance or cruelty, and it is easy to think a face beautiful, though it may be

artistically commonplace, if behind it shines a loving, charitable, gentle, and sympathetic soul.

All this is preliminary to the lesson I have in view. I repeat, therefore, that while the beauty of nature is the work of God the beauty of human nature is under our own control. I declare that if you are not attractive to your friends it is very largely your own fault. If a man hates you he may have sufficient reason for that attitude, and if he loves and admires you it is because you have made yourself lovable and admirable.

The law is that what is in your soul will find its way into your countenance. This law acts as the chisel of the sculptor on the marble; it makes lines, removes them, and changes them. If you were a magician and could place a man or woman amid adverse surroundings, where tears and struggles were the only company kept, you would find the personal history after a while in the face, and should you remove that man or woman to a happy environment, without care or anxiety, a corresponding change in the physical lines of the face would occur.

Again, if a person indulges in base thoughts, is fretful, selfish, and mean, nature advertises that fact in the countenance. And if, on the contrary, the

heart is pure, the faith strong, the resignation under suffering what it should be, there is a distinct and palpable transfiguration, a difference in the magnetic atmosphere, or what some call the aura, of that person. That law is creative and inexorable. Give the earth sunshine and it is attractive, but give it lightnings and earthquakes, and it is awful to look upon.

Religion, therefore, or the lack of it, lies at the bottom of it all. To see things as the Christ saw them; to have in the heart only sweet thoughts; to feel that the arms of the Father are bearing you up and that the angels are round about you; that earth may have its heavy sorrows, but heaven is straight ahead and not far off; to make the best of trouble instead of brooding over it; to find as many happy hours as there are within reach, and to be as nearly content as the circumstances allow—is it possible to follow such a policy, to possess that kind of religion, and not be loved as a beautiful, a radiant, an attractive soul?

Religion covers the whole of life and is the only sure remedial agency. If the world were Christlike we should be healthy in body, should live to a ripe old age without ache or pain, and be glad to die even as one is glad to get home after a toilsome journey.

THE BREVITY OF LIFE

As for man, his days are as grass.—Psalms ciii., 15.

WHEN you consider the matter seriously, you are startled at the brevity of our human life. Subtract the years that are spent in childhood and early youth before either the physical or mental system is equipped for its struggle, and subtract still further that mysterious third of our term which is spent in sweet sleep and pleasant dreams, and there are but a couple of score of summers and winters between the cradle and the tomb.

One listens to the chimes that beckon to the ideal, and while listening they become a mere echo which loses itself in eternity. God has set us the task of writing a symphony, but there is only time to write the *motif* and possibly to hum a few airs when the eyes grow dull and we fall asleep, leaving our glad task unfinished. As Solomon said, "The same thing happeneth to us all."

What is the thing that happens to us all? On the answer to this question depends our outlook. If the decision of heart and mind is favorable, it is like putting the watch-spring into the watch and winding it up. It is like telling the traveller to enjoy the scenery as best he can, but assuring him that there are far higher mountains and wider landscapes beyond. It is like telling the musician to hearken to the organ peal in the cathedral, but assuring him that when he hears the angel chorus sing, and kneels in the larger Temple, he will be filled with emotions which in comparison with these are but the throbs of a longing and unsatisfied heart. On the contrary, if the decision is unfavorable, our human life is a useless and a needless struggle with adversity. We are the slaves of a bitter fate, and our taskmaster swings his lacerating thong with something that resembles vengeance. Our years are prolonged misery, with the deep shadow of annihilation hanging above it like a storm-cloud filled with fiery bolts. The raven perches above our chamber door and croaks its song of "Nevermore!" The pulse falls below its normal beat, and health, moral and physical, is impossible. The sun mocks us by

day and the moon by night. We must needs love, for the soul cannot live without it, but the long corridor of our being is haunted with ghosts, and the air vibrates to the tearful word "farewell." Love becomes only an incentive to weep, for the joys of love are but the precursor of an eternal shadow.

I am convinced that if this life is all it was a grave mistake to bestow it. It is my impression that nearly all thoughtful men and women agree with me. Life is made up of alternate smiles and tears. Our happiness resembles the scattered moments of sunshine on a cloudy day. And what do these tears and smiles amount to if they are all there is for us in the treasury of God and all He intends to apportion to us? The ordinary life, the average life, has more weeds in it than flowers. From the time the eyes open to an intelligent view up to the hour when our friends gather to whisper "He is dead," we wrestle with circumstance, breaking forth into laughter at one moment and the next shivering in the presence of a misfortune; disturbed by inharmonious surroundings, and trying bravely to make the best of them, at the end wondering what it all means, or if it means anything. If there is no more,

—if the story is to be finished before it is half told, and just as we have become interested in it, if our sweetest relations to each other are honey to-day and will be wormwood to-morrow,—then I dare to say that our seventy years are not profitable, are not worth the having. Better never be at all than only be what we are now. In no wide or generous sense does it pay to be alive. Why should you sacrifice for the maintenance of your integrity—why light the lamp of conscience and keep the wick trimmed through the dreary night, if there is no morning? Why not drift carelessly whither the current may take us? All this paintaking is in vain. It is like hoarding gold and being despoiled of it by the robber Death. It is trying to be a hale and hearty man when even manhood is a mere chimera.

But let some angel guide you to a different vantage-ground of observation. Let him draw aside the curtain of time and give you a glimpse of eternity. Let him touch your blind eyes, as the Saviour touched the eyes of the peasant, and bid you look at the things which no heart hath yet conceived. There stretches the road you are to travel, and it

leads through the churchyard and is lost in the glories of the distant horizon. You cannot see the end, for there is none. A new life in a new environment is to be yours, and in that other life you shall be your nobler, grander self if you lay the foundations for it in the character that is to be fashioned by these smiles and tears, which no longer seem insignificant.

Far, far away in the dazzling distance you see the loom of that house of which the Scriptures tell us, the resting-place of weary souls, beyond whose threshold there is a peace that passeth understanding. It is a house in which the cruel grasp of earth is loosed, by whose doors no hearse ever rumbles and under whose roof you will have the opportunities which have been heretofore denied.

Look again. There are the lost but still loved,—the dear ones, whose voices were long since hushed,—and they long for reunion even as you do. In heaven you and they will once more embrace.

With such a prospect, does life pay? Is it worth while to struggle and be patient, to mourn and be resigned? What are these tears and smiles and struggles but stepping-stones, up which you climb

with difficulty, but with a heart of hope and faith and gladness? The storms may lower; they are nothing. We may have a painful allotment of fortune; it is nothing. We may even follow our dear ones to the grave; it is nothing. Heaven is close at hand, and this lower life is a glorious life, because, like the turbulent river, it flows into eternity.

OUR PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

For all things are yours. Whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.—
1 Corinthians iii., 21, 22.

THIS text puzzled me for many years. That it was a statement of fact I had no doubt, for I regarded St. Paul as a scholar and a philosopher as well as an inspired teacher. And yet I was only too conscious that I had no personal sense of possession, but, on the contrary, was oppressed by my poverty of body, mind, and spirit. If all things were mine, in what way could I establish my claim to them and enter into the enjoyment of them?

The question was solved in the most unexpected way. On an August evening I was sitting under a tree by a country roadside in company with a thoughtful man and his little family. The sky was cloudless after a sultry day, and the breeze made an Æolian harp of the branches overhead. We listened to its music in silence for a while, and then my

friend, who was an ordinary workman, but whose soul had discovered many a secret, preached a sermon which I shall now repeat to you.

“I am one of the richest men in the world,” he said, “and my wealth is so abundant that I cannot possibly make full use of it. My one debt is a debt of gratitude to God, and I can neither pay it here nor hereafter.” Then, after a moment, he added, “I am the rightful owner of the whole universe.

“Look at that broad landscape stretching for many a mile to the horizon; that valley which has been fashioned after millions of years of patient work and is now bearing a rich harvest in its embrace; that rivulet which babbles close at hand, singing its *Te Deum* through the long days and nights; that wooded mountain which stands like a giant holding up the sky—these are all mine. I gaze at my large possessions in rapturous worship; they are the temple in which I pray; they are the altar at which I kneel and ask pardon for duties left undone. My Father built this temple for me; for you also, but your right to it does not interfere with mine, nor mine with yours. We need engage in no litigation to decide which has the better claim. Some one

thinks this land is his and his deed is in the registrar's office, but he is mistaken, for it is ours as well as his, and the enjoyment of it is for any one who has the capacity of appreciation.

“And see the stars coming out in their rich splendor one by one as the daylight fades. They also are mine; they shine on me and for me. They tell me strange stories of infinite space, infinite power, infinite love. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork,’ and firmament, heavens, and God are all mine.

“Look at wife and children, also, playing with pebbles or sleeping on the mother's bosom. He has given them to me that I may have a home on earth which will tell me something about the home above. The affection which binds us into a family bundle, the responsibilities of parentage, the dreams which come to me of my boy's future, are from His hand, are His gift. Can I be too thankful for such bounty, and when I have so much can I ask for more? I come home from my daily toil, and the kiss on my cheek, the pressure of the little arms about my neck are my evening benediction. I am more than contented; I am oppressed with the weight of my blessings.

“ But that is not all. There is more, so much more that there is not time to tell it. Christ is mine, and His religion is mine. The New Testament was written for me, and it is a possession of which no man can rob me. My house may burn, my crops may fail, my savings may be stolen, but the good cheer of Christ is always secure. The love of the Father, which He has revealed, is a great reservoir of strength from which I draw in all the emergencies of life. My whole being is illumined by thoughts which had to be told me by this Messenger from above, for I could never have discovered them of myself. They are my sunshne, my moonlight, my starlight.

“ Yes, and best of all, heaven is mine when life has no more work for me to do. The day that is done is the prophecy of another day to come, and the life that is spent assures us of another life about to begin. My youngest child left us in the winter. We mourned, for it is hard to part with such gifts of God. But my heaven was his also. He went into no strange country; he only went home. We shall see him again. I sometimes think I can hear his voice even now, and the pattering of his little feet,

and when the shadows fall for us, who are getting old, he will be on the threshold to bid us welcome.”

My friend was right. He was one of the rich men of the earth. His wealth was not in coin, but in a faith which coin could not buy. My puzzle was solved, and I know what the text means. If God is our God and we can call upon Him in our daily need; if Christ and His revelations are all for us and we have a right to appropriate them to our personal use; if we are in such frame of mind that the beauties of the physical universe belong to us to enjoy them to the utmost limit of our capacity; if heaven is ours and we can look forward, not with hope merely, but with certainty, to a reunion with the beloved, we have riches beyond the compass of thought, and we may well be happy and strong and faithful. Bear bravely, for God is above you.

SORROWS AND TROUBLES

For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.—Hebrews xii., 6.

PERHAPS the most serious question in connection with the spiritual life is this: Why are there so many troubles and sorrows in the road to heaven?

No thoughtful soul ever bowed under an affliction without wondering why the Lord thought it best to make suffering so large a part of our experience. He could have arranged matters very differently if He had wished to do so, but He chose to have them as they are. There must therefore be a very important significance in our burden-bearing, but what is it? We may be perfectly resigned to His will, and may believe, without the shadow of a doubt, that wrenching griefs and heart struggles are all right, but we cannot suppress the query, Why are they all right? To the mere onlooker from another planet the situation would be interesting, curious,

and painful. He would see men wrestling with the most perverse circumstances, and apparently conquered by them, and women weeping over sorrows too deep for sympathy to reach. To him this would be the oddest of all worlds, administered on a plan which he might find it difficult to understand.

But it seems to me possible to get a glimpse of the meaning of it all, to so far comprehend it that we are able to say, perhaps in feeble accent, "Thy will, not mine, be done." If it is possible to do that we shall be greatly comforted and our power of endurance will be largely increased.

The golden key to the mystery is found in the apparently cruel statement made in the Book of Revelation: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." The Lord is our Father, and if you are a parent you will readily see what is meant. If you are indifferent to the welfare of your children, caring more for your own pleasure than for their good, you will allow them a very large license, let them go their own way, even though it be the wrong way. But if you have the true parental heart and wish to insure for the dear ones that integrity and sturdiness which are necessary to a noble character you will

not only watch over them with solicitude during the formative period, but you will rebuke them, and even sternly deny them certain undesirable gratifications. You chasten them in order to make them chaste or pure, for that is the meaning of the word. To chasten is to purify by discipline. If it be true that to be pure or perfect is the chief end to be sought, and if it be true that if left to our own impulses or passions we should never become pure, but that by discipline we may become so, then God would either cease to love us or else cease to be good unless He allotted such pains and griefs as would make the soul stronger by its endurance of them. It may seem a strange thing to say, but it is true, that God would not be a father if He failed in that sharp discipline which in this life causes regret, but will some time prove itself to have been a blessing in disguise.

I suppose that the bar of gold which is placed in the smelting-pot may be very unhappy for a time. It does not know very much about the worthless and debasing alloy which is mingled with its very substance, and it therefore cries out against the cruelty of the fire which heats it to the melting-point. But the goldsmith loves his gold too much to heed its

cries. The fire is the chastening element, and he plies the bellows with a rugged strength. But when the end comes and the pure metal has been separated from the alloy, will it not be seen that a hot fire, a consuming flame, is proof of the goldsmith's skill and wisdom and love?

If the ingot of gold, not quite understanding the process of purification, could have had a perfect faith in the goldsmith it would have suffered less during the ordeal of fire. In like manner, if we could believe that our sufferings have a grand mission to achieve, that they are under the guiding hand of the Master of our souls, it would largely alter our attitude toward them and also toward Him who has ordained them. To weep without hope or trust is to break your heart. Even though you cannot see the meaning of a grief, if you believe there is one, and that He sees it, you can summon your best strength, and you can be brave. But what of that man who neither sees any light in the darkness nor believes that there is any? A tempest with home in sight is one thing; a tempest with no resting place to look forward to—could any fate be harder than that or any condition more pitiful?

Whatever else may be said of our religion this one thing at least is true—that it gives good cheer when good cheer is most needed. In your direst strivings, when you are like to fall by the wayside weary and worn, you may see the shadowy form of the Christ beneath the branches of the olive tree. He is rent and torn by unspeakable anguish, but is whispering to the unseen messengers, who will carry the words to the Father, “Not my will, but Thine, be done.” He went from under the overhanging clouds to the better land, and if our wildly beating hearts will listen we can hear Him saying: “Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you.”

A few more months, a few more years, and the dawn of an eternal day will break over the hilltops, and then the journey will be ended. Blessed the man of whom in that hour it shall be said: “You have been faithful in a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things.” Courage, then! In God’s name, courage! This life is the smelting-pot in which the gold is separated from the alloy. Courage, and you shall enjoy as much sweetness and light as this lower life affords.

JUDGE KINDLY

And above all these things put on charity.— Colossians iii., 14.

ONE of the most important accessories to human happiness is to be found in a charitable judgment of those with whom you are brought into contact.

To be kindly rather than harsh in criticism is an imperative duty which we most easily neglect. Charity may seem to be an insignificant virtue, but it is very wide in its results and has a great deal to do with making your life sweet, fragrant, and smooth.

A hair in a watch is also a little thing, and yet it spoils the watch as a timekeeper. No matter how perfect the mechanism may be, the hair is a serious interference, a deplorable intrusion, and until it is removed the watch is practically useless. It is a matter for serious consideration, therefore, if you

have a hair in your watch, for while it is there you may as well have no watch at all.

A small vice, in like manner, may change the whole complexion of a character. The habit of finding a good motive wherever it is possible to do so is one of the noblest peculiarities of a true soul, and the habit of attributing a bad motive, or of searching for a bad motive, or of suspecting that an ordinary act may have a bad motive behind it, is just as discordant with the nature of things as a false note in an orchestra.

It is so much better to look on the bright side that I am inclined to say you cannot live a beautiful life without doing so. The most hateful and exasperating thing I know of is the tendency to see evil where you may just as well see good. Its effect on your self is spiritually depressing, and its effect on others is disastrous. To cultivate suspicion is to force the heart, the affections, to take slow poison. You can find no happiness in it, and you loosen the golden bonds of friendship, for the everlasting law is that what you give to others you get for yourself.

It is impossible to love and trust without being loved and trusted in return. Cause and effect are no

more sure than this statement of fact. It is equally impossible to distrust without being distrusted yourself. I would rather be disappointed nine times out of ten than to lack confidence in my friends the whole ten times.

In the first place, it is unchristian to judge people harshly. There is religion in confidence, but none in suspicion. I do not care what your creed is, or how earnest you are in your aspirations, or how diligent you may be in the performance of your duties, if you are a fault-finder, or if you seek for the faults rather than for the virtues of your neighbors, you are as far removed from true religion as the stars are from the earth. The angels will reject your acquaintance, and if the New Testament is a real revelation you cannot be approved by Him who said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Even the poor Magdalen found pity in His sight. While the wretched hypocrites were ready to stone her for a crime of which they were themselves not entirely guiltless He shed about her the radiance of a divine sympathy, even as the sunshine enfolds the broken reed and silently helps it to recover from its wound.

In the second place, you cannot afford to condemn,

for the reactive influence on your own soul is as unfortunate as it is powerful. To cultivate the spirit of criticism is to discourage the upward tendency of mankind. To denounce a sinner is to give him a push along the downward path. He needs a helping hand instead of a curse. That is what God gives him, and that is what Christ has promised him. Are you greater than they, that you dare to refuse it? To habitually attribute an evil motive where perhaps no such motive exists is a crime against the mercy of Heaven and an extinction of that love which we are required to have for the whole earth.

In the third place, we are largely the result of circumstance and environment. I do not know what I should have been had I been born in different surroundings. When I see what temptations beset half the world I wonder that they are as good as they are. I do not blame as much as I pity. It is possible that if I had been rocked in another cradle and been nursed in another mother's arms I should not be what I am now. Temptations are strong and the power of resistance is weak. Let us take no pride to ourselves because we stand on a high level;

but, on the contrary, let us be profoundly grateful that the right influences were round about us in our early days. We might be where they are who are in the depths if fortunate circumstance had not come our way.

And so I come back to the Christ. He is my philosopher, my guide, my revelation. Two duties lie before us—to be generous in our judgment of our friends and to be kindly and helpful to all the world. Herein we find a hard task, but it is a task on which the growth of the soul depends. Look for the good side in the character of your neighbors, and as far as possible make excuse for their weaknesses. Cultivate a spirit of love, judge gently rather than harshly, make the kindliness of your own soul felt by all, and you will soon discover that you have entered upon a new and a higher life. As to this seething world, which throbs with sorrow and guilt and remorse, be a noble influence, give of word and thought and deed into the great treasury of virtue, and so spend your days that not one of them will accuse you of neglect. That is the holy life to live, the only true life, the only Christian life.

THE TRUE AND THE RIGHT

It is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you.—Hosea x., 12.

WHAT is true will hold its own against any odds. The bright yellow flame may be hidden in the dense smoke for a while, but if you have patience the smoke will blow away and the bright yellow flame will make the night like day. Astronomers tell us of stars which have grown old and crumbled, gone to pieces, and filled the infinite spaces with their disintegrated particles, but no man has ever yet said that a truth has died. There is no death, but only life, to truth. It is born, or it is discovered, or uncovered, but, once seen, it is never extinguished. God's own life is in it, for it is a part of Him, and neither can earthquakes destroy nor avalanches bury it.

This also is true of what is right. It may be smothered by the private or the national conscience,

but it has its triumphal procession at last and drags wrong a prisoner at its chariot wheels. It is stronger than any one man; stronger than all the world in combination against it. You may sooner hope to blast Gibraltar and hurl it into the sea than to break what is right from its resting-place in the omnipotence of God.

It always conquers, and he alone who is on the side of right is the victor in the end. Stretch the line of life until it fades into the mystery beyond the hazy horizon of this present life, and you may be sure that evil is evanescent and right is eternal. When it shall be our privilege to take some high standpoint in the large future and look back on these fleeting, exciting days of greed and selfish rivalry, we shall see with clear, perhaps with tearful and regretful eyes, that every mean word and thought and deed, however great the promise of advantage, has entailed a direct and palpable loss, and that when we did right, though at a sacrifice, then, and then only, were we paid in the coin of happiness and self-respect. It never pays to do a wilful or a conscious wrong. Were that possible, the universe would contradict itself, and God Himself would be a dream or a myth.

There is but one principle that holds fast in whatever waters you cast your anchor, namely, that he can never be driven to shipwreck of soul who knows what he ought to do and dares to do it though it costs him so much that his heart breaks. A man's character is all he has, it is his one great possession, and if he loses that he loses all, absolutely all. With self-respect, the consciousness that your integrity is unsullied, you can face all worlds and look with undimmed vision on the Throne of the Eternal. Neither wealth nor poverty is known in heaven or regarded; but what you are in the fibre of your being; what you are in the moral timber of which you have made yourself; what you have done that is worth recording in a world filled with pitying angels,—these alone have weight and bring credit.

We may not all be rich, 't is true, and perhaps 't is pity that 't is true. You may have discomfort and struggle, possibly more storm than sunshine, a weary road to travel through these narrow years, but be sure of this, as sure as you are of the wisdom of God, that an honest man with a clean soul is worth more than all the wealth that excites our envy or stimulates our jealousy. To stand square with

the law of justice and sympathy and fidelity, to be a hero because you are unsoiled by deeds which sting with the painful sting of a wasp, is to lay up a treasure of which death cannot rob you and which will lift you out of the grave laden with the blessing of God.

Right is the normal heart-beat which indicates health and vigor, while wrong is that heart-failure which foretells death. You can live without many things and still be comfortable, but if you try to live without the approval of your conscience, despair will creep over you as the shadows of evening creep over the earth at sundown. Religion teaches us to keep our faces toward heaven, as the mariner watches the pole star, and to steer by what we see. To be true, just, kindly, is to bring heaven so near that when you die you will have but a step to go, and that step will take you within reach of a welcome that will make you glad that you have sacrificed all else but kept your faith in the true and the right intact.

CHRISTMAS DAY

If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought ; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.—Acts v., 38, 39.

IT does not always follow that a principle is true because it withstands the ravages of time. A piece of driftwood may float on the ocean for many a year without being destroyed, and yet it is only driftwood. A thought, even a superstition, may have a persistency which will keep it alive, half believed, half doubted, for generations. The mere fact of survival, therefore, proves little or nothing.

But if a principle, after being incorporated into life, produce good results and shows that it can produce equally good results wherever and whenever it is accepted, we may safely conclude that it is very close to an absolute truth. I may read the score of a musical manuscript and have only a vague notion of its merit, but when I listen while the full orchestra plays it then I know whether it will live

long or shortly die. If you place in my hand a kernel of corn and tell me that it will bring forth in plenty my faith in your statement depends on my confidence in you as an authority. After I have planted the kernel and have witnessed the result then I do not simply believe, for I know. You are no longer my sole authority, because I am an authority unto myself, and my relation to you is one of gratitude for a great benefit which I should not enjoy but for your generosity.

When I am told that progressive modern thought has perhaps already discovered truths which will render those of the New Testament obsolete and old-fashioned, as the stage-coach of our fathers is superseded by steam and electricity, I do not allow myself to be at all disturbed. What Christ taught inaugurated a new era in the moral consciousness of mankind, and I can see no evidence that those teachings have been worn threadbare, or that they have been outgrown. If there are men and women in the world whose lives are conducted on principles superior to those of Christ I have not had the honor of making their acquaintance. I have a right to judge others by myself, and as I find it extremely

difficult to reach the ideal which He presented, I conclude that I am not exceptionally dull, but that I represent the average man, and that there is no more reason to believe that we can live beyond or above the Gospels than that we can thrive without sunshine or be healthy without food.

We celebrate on Christmas Day the birth of an idea, of an uplifting faith in God and in our fellow men, of a belief that this life is only one chapter in the biography of the soul; and this idea is like fresh air to one who has been stifled, like spring water to one who is well-nigh overcome with thirst, and like a full blaze of moonlight to one who is staggering in the darkness along an upward path. Introduce a man to this new and broader outlook, let his eyes rest on this far-off horizon line, give him opportunity to appreciate what such thoughts will do for him, and he becomes a new creature, gentler, braver, truer, nobler, more cheerful, and more resigned. A miracle has been wrought, for God and the Christ have entered his life and made it as productive as a wheat-field in which soil, sunshine, and dew are bringing forth an abundant crop. It is this creative quality of Christianity which makes it permanent.

We may not need it when we reach the end of our tether, when we are fully rounded and developed, when we are all we possibly can become, but until that distant if not impossible day we shall be dependent on it for the endurance which bears without complaint, for the hope behind the tears of sorrow, for the glowing sunset which gilds the western sky and tells us of a radiant morrow after the shadows of death's dark night.

If we stand by the manger of Bethlehem and look thence into the future we see a race on the threshold of a new era, its heart uplifted with new hopes and motives—motives which fill this life with beauty and hopes which dissipate the fog and bring the other life into full view. Under the impulsion of Christianity we move, slowly it may be, toward the ideal society and the ideal man. Every age gives us a clearer vision of the truth and larger strength to attain it. Eighteen centuries ago, when Christ preached to a wondering multitude, we heard the faintest echo of divine music, but every generation has brought us nearer to the grand chorus, and in good time we shall be under the same roof with the singers and join in the chorus of "Glory to

God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will."

Behind all our tears to-day is an unspeakable joy, for the very heavens have opened their gates, and the dim figures of the loved who have gone before move to and fro before our startled vision. The birth of Christ was the birth of a higher faith in the heart of mankind.

A NEW YEAR

Be ye therefore perfect.—St. Matthew v., 48.

WE are on the threshold of another year. There is no such thing as time to the soul, but our earthly limitations are such that it happens to be convenient to speak of months and weeks and days. Like grains of sand, which slip through the fingers no matter how closely we hold them, these weeks and months glide by us and refuse to stay even at our most earnest entreaty.

I have sat by a mountain stream and watched its unceasing activity as it broke over the rocks and hurried to its destination. At first it was a pleasure to listen to its music, for its enjoyment of its task seemed like the laughter of childhood. But after a little I grew almost frantic, for the rippling waters flew by me with incessant speed and I could not persuade them to linger for a single instant. Everlasting motion toward an end! Rhythmic motion,

now subdued as the current passed over a smooth bed, and then uproarious and vehement as it dashed over the rocks which tried in vain to obstruct its path.

So pass our days, quite heedless of our wishes, as though they were anxious to bear us to the Beyond; so pass our weeks and months and years, with ever-increasing haste, and one of our greatest surprises is that youth has suddenly changed to manhood, and that maturity has given way to gray haired age. No sooner do we begin to realize what it is to live than we find that already life has nearly ended.

The past is little more than a dream, a faint reminiscence, which leaves us in wonder as to what the future will be. The past is the echo of distant music, now like a song and now like a dirge. We have suffered, toiled, struggled, and each experience has left its joyous expression on the face or its furrow on the brow. The pendulum swings, and swings, and swings. It is omnipotent, it is irresistible. Neither a king, with all his resources, can purchase a moment's hesitation, nor can peasant hold it in his mighty hand during a single heart's beat. We are being borne on toward eternity,

whether we sleep or wake, whether we be rich or poor, whether we weep or laugh.

And why should it not be so? Wherefore are we troubled? The closer we get to the perfect man the less we regard this life, which is only the preface to the book, and the more ardently we regard the other life, which is the book itself. When faith is on the flood it sweeps all thought of time away. Let the current bear us where it will, we are in God's hands, and the current is subject to His instructions. Other worlds await us. Larger opportunities are in the near future. The soul, now hampered by circumstances, shall some time be free; the burden of environment shall be dropped, and when we are emancipated we shall be larger, nobler, and more like the Christ. What care we, then, for time? The years may come and go as they please, and their speed does not disturb us. We are on the road to our eternal home, and the nearer we get to it the higher are our anticipations, the deeper are our longings. Earth is nothing when heaven is in sight.

The perfect man! He is coming, but not yet. He is afar off, with his face turned this way. We

are simply spoiled children, with a New Testament, which we read but do not understand; with a ghostly sort of religion made up of dogmas which no one can explain; with a church so cold and formal that the Christ would hardly find a welcome there. Jesus said, "Follow me"; then went to heaven. If we do follow Him can we by any possibility reach another destination? Religion, in its last analysis, is simply love and nothing else. No matter what creed you adopt you cannot make it into a bridge over Jordan to the Holy Land, but if you have love in your heart the bridge is already made and you will cross in safety.

The world is mostly made up of heretics who think themselves orthodox. They believe almost everything except Christ. He has not yet been revealed to them. They know something about Him, but Him Himself they do not know. In twenty centuries more the race will have a real religion, to which the religion of to-day is the dry husk with scarcely a kernel of corn. Evolution is slow because it must tear down so much before it can build something better on the old site. The perfect man will be a Christ-man, with power over body and

control of mind. He will live on a higher spiritual level, become acquainted with the laws by which miracles were worked in other days, and will learn how to work miracles in himself. When man and God are at one everything is possible. When man is in harmony with the Infinite he can exercise a power beyond the reach of reckoning. There will be no poverty in that prophetic time, for when the rich man loves the poor and all classes are woven together in the fabric of a perfect society poverty will become an obsolete word and crime will be unknown.

I believe, too, that the day is coming when the other world will be an open secret. What the prophets and seers of Israel saw we shall see. There will be another Jacob's ladder, and the angels will come and go as they please and as our needs demand. Heaven and earth will be so close together that they cannot be told apart. The dead—but in the Christian's vocabulary no such word will be found; not dead, but born again; not dead, but living in the nearer presence of the Almighty, their love for us unbroken, their interest undisturbed, their power to help increased.

Year by year we throw aside something of the worn-out and old and take on something of the new and better. Year by year our sight grows clearer as we gaze upward with wonder. Year by year the Christ comes closer to our hearts, ready to teach us how to live. And so we speed the parting guest, grateful for the precious memories it leaves behind, and welcome the newcomer, bearing twelve months in his arms, with the prayer that it may lead us a full day's march toward the Christ-manhood and the Christ-womanhood.

GOD'S KINGDOM

Thy kingdom come.—St. Matthew vi., 10.

OF course the progress being made in all our material interests absorbs our attention and excites our wonder. We have not only discovered new natural forces but are making use of them in such fashion that the rarest luxuries of yesterday are the common comforts of to-day. If life is to be reckoned by opportunities rather than by "figures on a dial," we are lengthening its span with every new invention. The man who, instead of spending a week in travelling from New York to Boston, does his business in five minutes by telephone has added to his life by just the amount of time saved. He may not literally stretch his seventy years to an hundred, but he has crowded into them the experiences which his grandfather could not have had in a century.

Great as these advances are, however, they are

minute in comparison with the strides which have been taken in religious concerns. We not only have more religion than our forebears, but we have a wider and a more wholesome religion. And yet the religion which we enjoy and think so marvellous is meagre and vague and dim when measured by the possibilities of the future.

A thousand years are only a dream in the night, a mere particle in the great aggregate of eternity, and no man living can conceive of what the thirtieth generation from now will know concerning earth and heaven. That it will look upon us with something like pity for our ignorance, just as we look on the good folks who worshipped the gods of Olympus, goes without saying.

Would it be too much to predict that they of the coming time will be able to demonstrate the difference between soul and body and show that they are two different entities as easily as the chemist of to-day separates the oxygen and the nitrogen in a cup of water? Or that they will make such startling discoveries that when a man is in the proper condition he can see the air filled with spiritual beings who walk the earth unseen as the old prophet did

when he became inspired? Or that, in consequence of these facts, life, our human life, will be quite another thing from what it is now—higher, grander, nobler? Or that heaven and earth—that is, God and man—will be in such relations with each other that we shall look on our burdens and griefs with clearer eyes, and, knowing what they mean, use them for the development of qualities which now seem to be mere possibilities and of which we only catch a glimpse now and then?

It does us good, it is a decided encouragement, to feel that the road to eternal truth is a long one; that our light is only twilight; that the Almighty has in store for us many things which in His good time He will reveal, but which are hidden now because, as Jesus said, “Ye cannot bear them.”

There is a logic in these statements which seems to me irresistible. It is the logic of evolution, which may be slow in its processes but is sure to reach the goal at last. Let me illustrate. The world is full of the unseen, but not of the invisible. What was unseen by our fathers has become clear to us, and what is unseen by us will be clear to our children. The near-sighted man sees little, but when he wears

spectacles he sees more. The myriads of beings in a drop of water are unseen until we use the microscope, and then new realms break on our view. The heavens are a sealed book until we look through the telescope, and then we are overwhelmed. More and more of the invisible is becoming visible every day. Is there any limit to our discoveries? If we live long enough and walk far enough may we not see all things some day?

Look at the Christ! What did He know and see? So much that even He did not think it wise to tell it all. We have been trying to digest His philosophy of life for many ages, but have only succeeded in getting ourselves into a theological snarl. He wanted to tell us how to live, but we have persuaded ourselves that His only purpose was to tell us what to believe. He is the Stranger in our great company even now. If He were to return and repeat His words we should turn our backs on Him as they did of old. The bottom facts of Christian society and of a Christian life are not appreciated nor even recognized. We are millions of miles distant from the truth He taught. How close the Father was to Him! And yet no closer than He may be to us.

How calm under the stress of affliction He was! And yet not more so than we can be when we get our spiritual food from the same source. How constantly He felt the presence of unseen beings and what support they brought! And yet, though this is so strange that we can scarce believe it, those same angels are as nigh to us as they were to Him.

We must realize these things, must meditate upon them until they become a part of us, must appropriate them to our own use. Then the bitterness of life will give way to sweetness. There will be rainbows in our tears and behind our sighs a quiet resignation. There will be more hopefulness in our hearts, a strengthening faith which can endure all things, and our religion will be a series of lighthouses enabling us to steer clear of shoals and rocks and to anchor in the haven of heaven at last.

A LIVING FAITH

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith.—Romans iv., 20.

THE difference between the man of faith and the man of no faith is practically the difference between paradise and purgatory.

A man does not need to believe many things, just enough to give him a safe anchorage in stress of weather. Long creeds are tiresome, and the longer they are the more tiresome they become. As spiritual helps they are of very little value. If a man's theology consists of a few simple propositions there is small chance of his having a controversy within himself, whereas a complicated creed introduces many points of doubt.

If a man believes in little else than an honorable life, but believes in that at all hazards, and stands by it in all emergencies, he will make a good citizen, a loyal friend, and cannot miss the approval of God.

Such a man could not go to any other place than heaven even if he wanted to, for he does not belong in any other locality. In like manner, if a man believes only in the law of gravitation, but believes in that with might and main, he will not put up a building that is likely to tumble down and bring him to ruin. What he does build will be strong and solid. It may not be specially ornate, but it will last.

It is better to be absolutely sure of one essential thing than half sure of a dozen things. And so I venture to say that if a man is thoroughly convinced that he is in a world governed by law, and that behind the law is the Lawmaker, that right is everlastingly right and wrong always wrong, he has a sure clew to lead him through the intricacies of life, its bereavements, its poverty, its hardships, and the strange change which comes when he falls asleep at last. The whole of religion, all that is necessary to keep him in the high road to heaven, will lie like a panorama in full view. A few certainties, and after that he may speculate as much as he pleases, for his many speculations will not interfere with his few certainties.

The difficulty with the man who has no distinct belief is that he is not a safe guide for himself. He is not only afloat, but adrift. There is nothing he can depend on, very little of that patience and resignation which make things easy, and a good deal of that rebellion which makes them hard. He has more responsibility for himself than he can carry, and keeps watch on the bridge night and day, not knowing that there is a Captain at the helm.

I can speak with confidence concerning this mental attitude because in my younger years I passed into and through some of the more radical phases of doubt. The sky was not very blue in those days, and I got very little out of life. I was compelled to be honest with myself, and was therefore as miserable as I was honest. When at length I found good holding ground my anchor chain made merry music as it sought the solid bottom. I wanted little, but wanted that with a yearning inexpressible, for there is a desperation in feeling that you are a stray waif in a strange world and that you are certain of nothing but uncertainty. One cares very little what he does when there is no God visible and no heaven to go to. With the grave as the

miserable terminus of our journey one grows selfish and discontented. On the other hand, with a horizon line stretching beyond sundown one is careful what he does, because to-morrow he may be sorry.

A good, plain, square religion which everybody can understand, which appeals to the common sense of mankind, to the logic of the business man and the research of the philosopher, is the only thing to set this old world right and keep it right. You are bound for a port on the other shore, and you must govern yourself accordingly. There must be no death in our thoughts, for that is fatal to the development and discipline of the higher nature. Nothing makes a man so large, so generous, so unselfish, or so noble as a belief in immortality, and immortality must therefore be a fact or the universe is a huge deception. There must be another world somewhere in which these crooked things shall be made straight and these mysteries explained. Surely there will be a chance in some more favorable clime for us to make another effort in the light of a larger intelligence. We must also be able to look forward to a reunion after the hard separations which carry our dear ones into the light leaving us in the dark.

With such a faith vouchsafed by the Christ and by the longings of human nature we can bear and forbear, because the hour of rest is not far off. There is much more than this to believe if we have time to investigate, but it will serve our purpose.

PEACE IN THE SOUL

For the kingdom of God is joy and peace.—Romans xiv., 17.

THE Bible is the most practical book in the world. There is very little theology in it—not as much as some people think—but a great many inspired bits of advice as to the conduct of every day life, as though the writer loved the men and women who would read his words and was actuated by no other motive than to help them over rough places. For this reason the Book has maintained its hold on mankind. It is friendly, kindly, and encouraging, a book not to be read through at a sitting, but to be taken up at odd times and glanced at, just as you would look at a handful of jewels for a moment and then put them away.

I have noticed that it makes many, very many references to peace and joy—not the peace of a nation, that busy peace in which we compete for personal gain, but the peace of the heart, which

creates contentment and keeps the soul in poise or equilibrium; the peace which makes a man feel that everything will come out right in the end because nothing can come out wrong when God is guiding our affairs. It is once spoken of in very extreme language as "the peace that passeth understanding," like the peace which a sensitive soul enjoys when it gazes on a magnificent landscape, or like that which the lover of music has when he is listening to some superb orchestra, or like that which a mother has when she is sitting by the cradle of her first born, a peace that refuses to be analyzed, but is so deep and strange that no one can describe it to a person who has not felt it.

I am talking to myself as well as to you when I say that we could get a great deal more out of life if we were more reposeful. We expend too much energy on trivial things, things so unimportant that it does not matter greatly how they go. We allow ourselves to be disturbed by small matters, whereas the soul is big enough to look on them with indifference. We keep ourselves in a condition of nervous tension, which is not simply hurtful to the body, but equally so to the spiritual nature. Body and soul

are so closely related that overexcitement of the one seems to throw the other off its balance. You and I cannot be at our best until we are tranquil in heart with that kind of tranquillity which rests on the firm basis of faith that the angels of God are looking after our interests and trying to persuade us to take the right road to heaven. There is just an atom of insanity in us, and when we grow restless that atom is fanned into a flame. The truly sane man is the quiet-souled man. I say, therefore, since Christianity teaches a man to be quiescent, that the Christian religion will both make us sane and keep us so.

When crossing the ocean recently our ship ran into a storm. The sea was very rough, the fog closed in on all sides, and we had an uncomfortable time. The waves were in an ugly mood, and, on two or three occasions, swept the deck. I enjoyed it as little as did the other passengers and should have been grateful for a ray of sunshine. But that was not to be thought of. Suppose I had taken on myself the responsibility of the situation. The captain was on the bridge night and day, but suppose I had allowed myself to wonder whether he knew his business, and had offered him advice as to the conduct

of the vessel. Would that have allayed the tempest ; would it have stilled the troubled waters ; would it have kept the ship from rolling uneasily ? I should not only have done no good, but should have interfered to my own detriment. My duty was to keep on my feet as best I could, not to go beyond my province as a passenger, to bear in mind that the captain had passed safely through a thousand worse storms and was showing no anxiety about this one. If I had faith in the master of the craft there was no need to be afraid. Any doubt as to his ability would at once create havoc of mind and body. My duty was to keep still and to cherish the conviction that all would be well in a few hours.

Now, the spiritual difficulty we encounter in our lives is this subtle suspicion that, after all, there may not be a God, or, if there is, that He is not equal to the emergency. That rankest of all heresies lies at the foundation of our religious restlessness. We may as well face this fact and govern ourselves accordingly. The man who does not cheerfully meet his fate has a lurking doubt of God's existence. He may deny it to others, but he must needs admit it to himself. He may accept the longest creed that was

ever written and be orthodox in all the details of his professed belief, but if you could find your way into his heart of hearts you would discover that his faith in God is a social or ecclesiastical luxury, and as such is worth very little.

Did Christ have any doubt that a legion of angels would minister unto Him in His necessity? Can you conceive of Him as sitting at the window of His friends' house in Bethany on the night before the crucifixion and wondering if He could go through the next day's experience? On the contrary, He was self-possessed, even cheerful, and if the opportunity to avoid the cross had been offered He would not have used it. He knew that the Father was there, that the Father would be with Him, and that the cruel nails could not pain Him so much as a doubt of that Father's love.

We cannot follow that example except in a far off way. He said "Thy will be done" without a tremor, but we can say it with a tremor. The highest excellence is repose, trustful repose of soul, but you cannot be self-possessed until you know that you are possessed of God. The essence of religion is the soul's consciousness that as its day so shall be its

strength ; that God and you can do anything and bear anything. After that you will be at peace, quiescent and acquiescent. He who has hold of God's hand and knows it, is the most cheerful soul this side of heaven.

HIGH THINKING, HIGH LIVING

But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest.—Acts xxviii., 22.

WE sometimes speak of certain things as the “necessaries of life,” and we pass laws to prevent their monopoly by any scheming financier. We universally recognize their relation to the welfare of society and try to keep them in abundance within reach of all. They insure health, strength, and happiness. So carefully do we guard this public policy that any infringement of it is regarded as a crime.

The world is young as yet and hardly recognizes the fact that there are necessities of life for the soul as well as for the body. As food develops the physical system so ideas develop the spirit of man. It is no more important that you should lay in a stock of the one than of the other. Men live on their ideas quite as much as they do on bread.

As there is a difference in food so there is a difference in thoughts. Some kinds of food are so easily assimilated that the result is physical cheerfulness and endurance. Other kinds produce weakness and a tendency to disease. The normal action of the digestive organs is interfered with, and the result is depression and inability to cope with the difficulties which lie in every one's path and must be removed if we are to pursue our way to success in life.

All this is equally true of ideas. Some are exhilarating, stimulant in their nature, uplifting, making us optimistic, hopeful, ready for any fortune that may befall. They nourish the soul, make it athletic, take away all dread of the future, give us what the racer has who feels sure that he is going to win the prize and whose anticipation of victory adds to the speed of his feet. Tell me frankly what your controlling thought is, what kind of thinking you do every day, and I will tell you what kind of a man you are, whether you are making friends or enemies, how you will meet the emergencies which come into every human experience, whether affliction will embitter you, or mature, sweeten, and ripen you. We are what we think. Your chief thought

is as truly the master of your destiny as the captain is master of the vessel which he guides through storm and drifting currents. Your happiness depends not half as much on your surroundings as on yourself. It is possible to have nothing and yet to have all, and possible to have all and yet to have very little. A cheerful heart can lighten the heaviest burden and make it comparatively easy to bear. If you would discover what a man's life is worth either to himself or to others you need not look at his bank account, for that is no sure indication. If you can find out what kind of thoughts he cherishes you will learn the whole story.

It is also true that some ideas produce spiritual depression. There is a dyspepsia of the soul as well as of the body. Your thoughts may force you into a perfect purgatory and keep you there until you change your mental outlook. The apple seed never grows to become a pear tree, and the low thought never results in a high life. The level of your thinking decides the level of your living, because one is cause and the other effect. Love, and you will be loved ; hate, and you will be hated. Your attitude toward others is the sure indication of their

attitude toward you, and the way in which you bear yourself toward the world is the product of your conviction as to your duty to be kind and helpful or your determination to selfishly get all you can at whatever cost to others.

At this point I open the New Testament and find there a philosophy of life which startles and amazes me. We have never heard such words as were uttered to that little group of listeners on the Mount. We are told that the good God has a regard for our welfare; that a place has been provided for a continuance of our labors after this short life has ended; that Jacob's ladder still stands, and angels are constantly ascending and descending; that human experience of all sorts is spiritual education; that an unseen hand is always stretched out for our protection and guidance, and that nothing can happen to us which may not be used as a stepping-stone to higher things.

One trembles with gratitude in the presence of such elevating thoughts. A vista is opened which almost wearies the eyes by the radiance of the path we are called upon to tread. That path leads through showers of tears, through the storms and

tempests of affliction, through loneliness and struggle, through tasks which will tax our strength to the utmost and through bereavements which will wring the heart to the point of breaking. All these, for some mysterious reason, are the "necessaries of life," and every one who has lived has tasted the bitter and the sweet.

But heaven lies before us. It is enveloped in an impenetrable mist,—a mist made iridescent by the shadowy forms which flit hither and yon on their errands of mercy, but there it is, and it is our destination. Such thoughts are transfiguring in their influence. If they become a part of us, if we have appropriated them, assimilated them, we must needs be strong and cheerful, enduring and resigned, even as was the Holy One, who went to Bethany, thence to Gethsemane, and thence to the Father.

THE IDEAL MAN

Even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.—
St. Matthew v., 48.

IN the long past of human history there has been but one ideal man. He came, He startled the world, He disappeared. His stay was just long enough to drop a few seed principles into unwilling and barren soil, but they took root, grew into a forest of stately trees, and now our social order and progress thrive under their grateful shade. Never has a man said so little and accomplished so much. Every thought was a revolution ; every word shook the earth like the blasting of rocks for the material of a new foundation.

The Christ stood at a point which was a half-way station between the animal man of the past and the ideal man of the future. Humanity began as a rival to the brute ; it will end as the rival of angels. By slow degrees it has achieved an upward climb, and

every step has brought it closer to heaven. The untold millions who have fallen by the wayside will continue the journey in another life. Generations have been snuffed out like a candle, only to be transferred to larger opportunities and a better environment. We also shall drop our earthly work to complete it in the immeasurable eternity toward which we are surely drifting. Without that eternity this life would be a grim disaster, but with it we use to-day, if we are wise, as a stepping-stone to an endless series of to-morrows.

The dignity and grandeur of the soul's possibilities are beyond the reach of the imagination. Every age pushes us forward into a wider development. Every experience, whether it is filled with smiles or tears, with leisure or struggle, is intended and is fitted to give us new strength for the new outlook which it unfolds. The divine consciousness is always present that we can do more and be more. A glowing ember from the altar of God is in the soul, and though it now slumbers it will some time be fanned into a flame. The earth may for a while enchain our attention, for it is a fascinating novelty to be alive, as the traveller toward the mountain-

top may rest satisfied with the prospect which stretches before his wondering eyes ; but there is an inward voice which tells us that we must keep our steady way until the summit is reached, and that the toil will be repaid by what is waiting for us there.

What you are now is as nothing to what you will be, and you can never find perfect rest until the throne of God is in sight. When, therefore, you think of the soul's capabilities, of this earthly life as the dedication of a book to be hereafter written ; when you see that the laws of the universe, stern and implacable, are nothing more than the strong hand of a father who restrains his child from inflicting an injury upon himself, then you are in harmony with the divine order ; then you get a glimpse of true religion ; then you are working side by side with the Christ. To know what God wants, and to discover that you can never be happy until you also want it is to learn the secret of usefulness and contentment.

We are too perfunctory in our religion. We think to buy heaven by an obedience which is often irksome. We imagine that if we believe certain

doctrines our belief will offset a selfish life. It is not belief that saves. There are no dogmas in heaven, but love only. Creeds are well enough as a pastime, but the serious business of life is to be your better self in spite of temptation, and to grow larger and nobler with every decade that flies into the past. Growth is the watchword of the soul.

That kind of manliness which knows how to keep its cheer in adversity as well as in good fortune; which cares for nothing except its own preservation and increase; which looks on unsullied honor and integrity as the only priceless jewels earth can offer—that kind of manliness and womanliness is another name for godliness, and the only religion which knows no change is securely based on it. You may be rich or you may be poor; it is a mere incident. But if you are true, faithful, loyal to your destiny, seeking to be of service to the world because it is God's world, you belong to Christ and He belongs to you. You may weep or you may laugh, you may sit in the sunshine or the shadow, you have what money cannot purchase—a peace, a serene joy, a poise, a self-possession, which are a foretaste of the eternal life.

THE LORD WILL CARE FOR YOU

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.—Psalms xxiii., 1.

THE man who looks on the bright side of life even when standing under the shadow of a bitter experience is called an optimist.

The man who always sees the cloud, but never its silver lining, who predicts that there will be lightning, and floods, and plagues to-morrow, in spite of the sunshine which floods the earth to-day, is called a pessimist.

I have often noticed that a dog, when free to do as he pleases, is sure to choose a sunny spot to lie down in. He stretches himself at full length, and in his own peculiar way expresses the pleasure he takes in his good fortune. His very yawn and his look of happy reposefulness constitute a language that we all understand, and it tells us of the happiness which he enjoys.

I respect the dog for the sensible view of life which he takes, and would fain follow his example. In this one regard he knows a great deal more than some men and makes a better use of his opportunities.

Of all people in the world the most irreligious is he who looks at the evils of life so persistently that he cannot recognize any good in it; and of all hurtful habits which characterize mankind the most injurious is the habit of keeping one's eyes open to catch a glimpse of the disagreeable, and keeping them shut whenever a moment of good cheer is approaching. Such a habit is demoralizing and spiritually weakening. It seems to be continually assuring us that God's providence has fallen into a sound sleep from which there is no waking.

I am a thorough optimist, and I take great delight in the fact. If you were to rob me of my feeling that things will come out all right in the end you would take from me the possession which I prize most of all.

This optimism is not the result of temperament, but of conviction. With the dog who lies in the sunshine it is instinct, but with mankind it is the product of a careful use of the reasoning faculties.

The instinct of the dog and the brain of the man lead to the same conclusion, namely, that whenever there is sunshine it should be appropriated.

It is just as much a duty to put the hard experiences of life away and to keep in mind its possible enjoyments as it is to be pure-hearted or charitable. Never dwell on your misfortunes, though they be many, for it will embitter the soul and render it unfit for the work of the future. Brush aside unpleasant memories, so far as lies in your power, and even try to forget them. There is no use in living over again and again the scenes through which you have passed, whether they refer to the evil you have done to others, the evil that others have done to you, or the unavoidable sufferings which you have borne. God has said that so far as He is related to your mistakes they shall be "buried in the depths of the sea," and if He can forget them, forgetfulness is one of the virtues which ought to be practised on our part. It is not what you have been in days gone by, nor what you have done which is most important, but what you are to be and do in the future.

We can find much that is beautiful in nature and in life if we will but look for it. The world is to the

thoughtful mind a never-ending panorama, with its stars, its ocean, its hills and valleys, its crops and its clouds, its flowers and fruits. It is an awe-inspiring mystery, a realm of wonders that must needs rouse the dullest soul to worship. The change of a seed into a sapling ; the transmutation of a blossom into an apple or cherry ; the chemistry by which from the rugged soil color and perfume are extracted—these are miracles which lead a thoughtful mind along a narrow upward path whose terminus is the throne of God Himself.

And a human life is full of beauty and mystery too. The tears you shed and the reasons for shedding them ; the laughter that fills the air and the causes which produce it ; the slow development of the child into a man ; the gradual sunrise of ideas in his soul until the whole being is flooded ; the love that draws him to his mate ; the home which the two will make when they have found each other ; the sorrow that breaks the heart when the old parent or the young child is taken away ; the grave, which is as much a part of the home as the rocking-chair or the cradle—who can fail to worship the unseen but all-seeing God as he contemplates these things ?

And add to this the thought, the certainty that there is no death, only departure and temporary separation; that unknown and unmeasured influences are about each one of us; that what we call heaven is just on the farther side of the churchyard. You may call that optimism, but it would be better to call it the truth, for truth it is. It brings the cheerfulness of resignation; it stirs the deeper ambitions of the spirit; it takes the various experiences of life, just as the composer takes the various notes of music and sets them in such relation to each other that a symphony is the result.

It is true that there are wearisome days and sad hours. The glorious Christ went through many of them, and we therefore could hardly expect to avoid them. They are stepping-stones toward heaven. They are as necessary to the soul as food is to the body. But if we meet them bravely and with undimmed faith we shall go through them unscathed. The angels will keep you company and see that you fail not and fall not. Keep the heart fresh and your confidence in God unshaken. Then you will some day be welcomed on the other shore by those whom you have loved on this earth.

MORE LIGHT

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.—St. John xvi., 12, 13.

THE more you ponder the Scriptures the more you find in them. They are not to be simply read, but carefully studied. They are like the ocean in that they fit every experience and are responsive to every aspiration.

The text disturbs us by its very richness. It shows us a vista so full of promise that we shade our eyes, while gratitude fills them with tears. No statement in the Bible so clearly defines the dignity of the soul or the close relation of God to it. One cannot accept it without a desire to live in the very shadow of the throne itself. Meanness becomes meaner still, vice more vicious, and virtue, honesty, and loyalty more precious.

God's revelations have always been made to those

who were willing to listen, and they will never cease. The old prophets were like the hills which lift themselves from the plain. Christ was the mountain which pierces the clouds and rises to heights unknown. But the loving lips of the Father are not sealed. There are many things yet to be said. We may not be able to bear them now, but when we long for greater knowledge that greater knowledge will come.

Christ did not speak to the disciples alone. He looked beyond them to the spectral ages to come, to the generations yet unborn who would read, and ponder, and ask for more. The disciples were the representatives of the whole family of believers and of the seekers in all time. In every century the race has had all it could use, but no century has all the truth there is. God is inexhaustible. We may grow, develop, aspire, but what we attain is only the crumb that has dropped from the Master's table, a handful of sand from the infinite stretch of seashore.

What Christ meant was that His coming created an appetite for the truth, the eternal truth, which will always hide itself behind the horizon, no matter how rapid our progress may be. And when His

earthly mission was ended, and He had returned to the home on high, that mission would continue. He was truth in the manger, truth along the dusty road He travelled, truth on the cross, truth ascended to heaven, with a spear-thrust in His side as a reminder of human ignorance, indifference, and hatred, and He is still the truth, ready to reveal Himself to those who seek Him with the earnestness of desire.

The world feels the need of a present Christ. It is not enough to look back through the mists of half-forgotten memories to Judea, not enough to look forward to the vague hope of a second coming. We want Him now, a spiritually perceptible Presence, for the burdens of life are many and heavy, and we cannot bear them alone. Christ, therefore, is not in heaven, but in a real sense He is here. There is no experience of honest joy or rugged sorrow with which He does not sympathize. There is no day in summer or winter when He does not form a part of the household. If our eyes are withholden and we see Him not it is because our lack of faith, like a grain of dust, has blinded them. The yearning of the heart is as loud as a trumpet-call, and when its

notes are heard in the other world ministering spirits hasten to our relief, unseen, perhaps, but not unfelt.

In the solitude of your grief you have the company of angels, God's messengers, who bring the good of heaven to the ill of earth. You are not forgotten, you are not neglected ; you are ever in the Eternal Mind. You may not grasp that fact: it may even seem to involve an impossibility, but it is the foundation on which all grandeur of character is built. Without it religion becomes devitalized and perfunctory.

All the beings in the other world are interested, profoundly interested, in the development of this world. Were this not so, would Christ have come that He might help us to make the crooked paths straight? If He has gone "to prepare a place for us, that where He is, there we may be also," is it not because the Father loves His children and is always ready to answer their cries for assistance and advice?

Close the shutters of the heart and you live in worldly darkness, open them and the sunshine of the Eternal Presence pours in. Think of these things, keep this mighty truth in mind, become

receptive to the influences from above and they will be to you what the dew is to the flowers. Revelations of holy truth, locked out by selfishness and passion, by avarice and enmities, are always knocking at the door, and to-day and to-morrow and every day God will speak to you, and the sweet influences of the higher life will make you calm and brave and strong.

Christ's heart was in heaven even when His feet were on the earth, and ours may be also. Those who look shall see, and those who listen shall hear.

MAKING THE BEST OF ALL THINGS

And be content with such things as ye have.—Hebrews xiii., 5.

I DO not suppose that any one is perfectly satisfied with his surroundings. There is no station in life which can furnish us with contentment. I have never yet seen a man who could truthfully say he would not in some respects change his environment if he could, under the conviction that if it were changed he would be a better-developed, a stronger, and a happier soul.

That is a very startling fact and one which has attached itself to every generation since the first created being opened his eyes on this beautiful world, or listened to the music of the wind as it used the branches of the trees for harpstrings. Moreover, I judge that the fact will remain one of the chief characteristics of human nature until the last generation enters the shadow that keeps the other world from view.

I sometimes wonder what kind of a creature he would be who had just what he wanted and all he wanted. Would he be happy or would he be miserable? I confess that I am unable to answer the question. The condition of affairs would be so different from anything we have experienced that it is impossible to say what the result would be. Even when I think of heaven I cannot understand why there should not be longings and even anxieties, provided there is progress. A soul that has nothing more to attain, which has reached the end of its tether, is to me inconceivable. I like to think of the other life as the continuance of this life, and of myself as stepping from narrow to large opportunities when I die, and if this be so I must be brave and strong in heaven in order to make use of the gifts of God which the angels will lay at my feet.

I lay down this principle, therefore, that so far as in us lies we must influence our environment instead of allowing it to influence us, just as a bed of roses throws its perfume on the air. I have known many a man to be crushed because his home was not all it should have been, and many a woman broken-hearted because of inharmony in the household, and

I have questioned my religion to discover if it can afford a remedy. Is it possible to endure the ills of life in such a spirit that we shall not be harmed by them, that we shall even grow better and purer through their adverse influence? If this is God's world and not the Evil One's, and if there is no lack of wisdom in the structure of the soul, we ought to be able to hold our own against all odds, for otherwise our life is simply a cruelty and our chief sorrow is that we were born into it.

Now, it is not probable that any change can be made in your environment, but it is certainly possible so to alter your attitude toward it that you will learn how to make the best of it, and that is the most important of all secrets. If you worry over the inevitable and the unavoidable you simply waste your time and your energy and break your heart. The question is not how to get rid of the disagreeable, but how to become independent of it, and to live your own life in spite of it. The more you kick against the pricks the more you harm yourself. Sometimes you can climb over a wall when you cannot knock it down. If you can neither climb over it nor knock it down, stay on the side where you are

and see if you can make it a garden spot. Enjoy what you can, and don't allow the grinding ills of life to disturb you any more than can be helped.

All this means that you are to depend on yourself and not on your surroundings for your happiness. If you can get any comfort from outside enjoy it and be thankful, but you must find your chief joy in the consciousness that you are doing your duty as you understand it and are helping others whenever the chance is offered. You must manufacture your heaven in the workshop of your own heart. Take what comes in the spirit of one who feels that the dear Lord is with you, that the Lord is personally present and gives you not only a full measure of sympathy but also the strength to endure calmly, patiently, and bravely. That state of mind will induce spiritual and also physical health, for worry brings rheumatism of body and neuralgia of soul.

It is easy for me to tell you to rise above the jarring inharmonies in your environment and to live in your own thoughts and purposes, but the task is an extremely difficult one, I know. At the same time it is what the Christ did, and the doing of it is in the line of the religion which He proclaimed. He

was in the world, and He did His duty to the world, and without doubt He found some pleasures in the world, but He was serene amid adverse surroundings, and though conscious of discord, lack of sympathy, and even suspicion and hatred He was in a degree independent, living His own life in the companionship of angels.

We may not do all that He did, but we may smooth many a rough corner and pass unhurt through many a thorny experience if we will but take ourselves in hand and look at life from His standpoint. The secret of living well is to live in peace, and to live in peace we must have peace in our own hearts. It is what we give to others which makes us happy rather than what we demand from them. In a word, life is not worth living unless we ourselves make it so.

HEALTH AND STRENGTH

Thy faith hath made thee whole.—St. Matthew ix., 22.

THERE are two matters in connection with the Christ which I frequently ponder. They may seem to you to lack any special significance, and yet, though small, I liken them to the rudder of a vessel, which is as nothing in comparison with the great bulk, but which controls the situation and determines the course to be pursued.

In the first place, it is a curious fact that every artist who has portrayed the face of Christ has used his highest ideal of facial expression as a model. Even then he has failed to make his canvas represent his conception. The countenance has been noble without haughtiness, benevolent but full of power, marked by gentleness without a trace of weakness. It is sometimes comely and sometimes sad, but always grand, a beautiful face, with perhaps the shadow of a great sorrow on it.

In the second place, we have no knowledge that He ever suffered from the physical ailments to which ordinary human nature is so prone. He was a wholesome, vigorous, unspeakably healthy being, taxed to the utmost by the constant demands made upon Him during the three years of His public life, but constantly receiving from some hidden source a renewal of strength. He was perfectly poised and always ready to meet an emergency, whether it was to face the hostile prejudices which plotted His death or expend some subtle energy in restoring the sick or dying; calm as the ocean on an August day, omnipotence in the deep recesses of His nature, indifferent to all fortune, and caring for nothing except the will of God, as though God and He were in closer relations than it is easy for us to conceive.

Is this wholeness of body and this grandeur of facial expression the result of miracle or the product of natural law? And if the latter, then does it follow that since we are to imitate Christ in all other things we may also imitate Him in these? Modern psychology comes to our rescue, solves the problem, and opens to our eyes very attractive possibilities.

We know that strong emotions change the facial

expression. A furious fit of passion, incarnate diabolism, twists the face into a shape that is repulsive, while the rapture of holy ecstasy acts with an equal magic in the opposite direction. Habitual passion, anger, revenge, envy, selfishness leave their unmistakable autograph in the countenance. The companionship of holy and high thoughts also leaves its traces, which are so plain that he who runs can read them, while a quarrelsome disposition reflects itself in the face as in a mirror. These are facts easily observed.

It is also true that the higher a man lives above the animal level the more his body is affected by his mental condition. A depressing or an ugly emotion will change the pulse, while a pure feeling, one of good cheer, charity, kindliness, has a tendency to produce physical equilibrium. It is easier to keep well if one loves than if one hates. Science is impressing these facts on us with renewed emphasis every day.

A common-sense religion, therefore, is the prime necessity of the age, the force which is ultimately to redeem the world. Religion deals only with great and noble things. It cultivates the pure, the true, the good. It broadens the shoulders when burdens

are to be borne, it calms the perturbed spirit when sorrows visit us, it whispers, "Peace, be still!" in every storm.

You must not, however, mistake your creed for religion. A creed separates men one from another, but religion unites them. A creed does not engender charity for the opinions of others, but religion does. A man may have all the essentials of religion and yet be in doubt on certain theological points, or he may be logically clear in his theology and yet not be in any true sense a religious man.

Religion is another name for love of all the world, with God, the father of all the world, in the background, and Christ, the lover of all the world, in the foreground. It produces peace, resignation, repose, and these things are the basis of physical health and of spiritual beauty. Men and women should be noble creatures to look upon and vigorous in body. We have broken laws and are therefore neither the one nor the other. But Christ was both, and Christ's followers will become both when their thoughts and lives are in harmony with the will of the Father. Goodness, uprightness, are the first steps toward a heaven here and a heaven hereafter.

THOU ART THERE

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there : if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.—Psalms cxxxix., 8.

THIS is a very significant statement and one which will repay a second thought. In some odd way our fathers put a limit to the omnipresence of God and declared that there is one place in the universe in which He is not to be found. Having theologically laid out a separate locality for the wicked, they rashly concluded that God never crossed its boundary line. They prayed to Him as a father, the father of every human being, with a love so boundless and deep that they could neither conceive of it nor measure it, and yet there was a door whose threshold He would not pass and a region in which His redeeming presence was never felt. They ignored this contradiction of terms and practically reduced the Almighty to a moral level which we should severely and justly criticise in an earthly parent.

Within the last two generations, however, we have been re-reading the Bible in the clearer light of new knowledge, and it has caused us to revise a great many of our former opinions. The new theology is based on a larger faith than the old, and if we think of God differently it is because we have come closer to Him.

I am asked every now and again if I believe in hell. I have never known a man who did not believe in it. It is not possible for any one of ordinary intelligence to deny the fact. For myself, I have been in more than one hell during my long experience, and as I look about the world I see others who have not yet escaped from it. Sin, with its attendant remorse, its ghastly regrets, its overwhelming sense of unworthiness, its spectral fears—what is all this but hell? Certainly it is not heaven, but the very opposite. One need not think of hell as in the future, because it is all about us, and souls that are drowning their better selves in dissipation are in it without knowing it. By and by, long before their career is closed, when they recognize the fact that they have wasted divine energy on folly, they will see that they have literally made their bed in hell.

But I emphasize the fact that "Thou art there." There is not a struggling, wrong-headed, wilful being on the planet who has not his God for an onlooker and a companion. He is not a wrathful but a pitying God, who brings all the resources of omniscience to bear on that soul's redemption. A broken law will inevitably crush, but with the crushing comes the pleading call to duty, and to listen to that call is to counteract the effects of evil. A good thought lessens the power of an evil thought, and the habit of right thinking kills all wrong thinking. One cannot glance at Christ, and so catch a glimpse of the ideal, without absorbing a tonic which points to health. He can at any moment begin the ascent to a nobler manhood, because God has never deserted him, and never will, but sends redeeming angels to guide him through the slough of despond to the mountain-top.

Now, if this be true of the present stage of existence, it must be still more true of the next. When you die you will be just what you are now until you change yourself for the better. Death has no power to make a man good or bad, but is simply a change of residence. You will gravitate to your own place

just as you have done here. But wherever you are you will be within reach of His urging, alluring, and redeeming love. There can be no spot in the universe where He is not. The Psalmist is right : God is in heaven, and He is in hell. If, therefore, God is there, the whole influence of His presence will be, must be, to draw you to a higher moral and spiritual level. To say that God will under any circumstances, either now or at any other time, leave you to your fate, is to wrong the Good Shepherd who left the ninety-and-nine sheep safely folded and wandered through the bleak darkness in search of the lost one.

That kind of love is, in my judgment, the greatest possible incentive to righteousness. You cannot resist it, if you ponder it, any more than you would treacherously desert your best friends, any more than the drowning mariner would reject the buoy which the life-saver throws to him. Religion is a recognition of God's love, which is patient, pitiful, and always at hand. You may be in hell to-day, but "Thou art there" also, the God who made you, the God whose Christ came to whisper good tidings, the God who wants you in heaven. That love must

win you at last, and when you surrender to its consecrating influence you will have but one regret, that you thought you could live so long without it.

TO THE DOWNHEARTED

And let us not be weary in well doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.—Galatians vi., 9.

“ **D**ON'T give up the ship!” was the dying injunction of Captain Lawrence on one of the stormiest days in our national life. That cry has been ringing in our ears for a couple of generations, and when the emergency is on us and our energies are taxed to their utmost those words make our hearts beat with renewed vigor.

During our civil war—now almost ancient history—I was with a regiment of worn-out men on a certain occasion. They had travelled fast and far, and were ready to drop by the roadside through sheer exhaustion. The life had apparently gone out of them. They were hungry, they had been without sleep, they had faced a pelting shower, and were drenched and discouraged. Suddenly the band struck up, playing a patriotic air, and then I realized

as never before that there is in human nature a reserve power which is without limit. Eyes grew bright, strength returned, good cheer prevailed, and the remainder of the day's stint was accomplished without further fatigue.

The soul is so much stronger than the body! The body dominant, nothing is well done. The soul dominant, everything is done easily. The body as the servant of the soul will shirk its duty and magnify difficulties and turn the whole man into a coward. The soul as master of the body, if inspired with a noble idea, will convert a man into a hero.

If, therefore, I can win the attention of your mind or soul,—that mysterious something which is the proprietor of the body and lives in it as one lives in the house that he owns and can do as he pleases with,—and if I can persuade you that your life is a grand and noble thing, to be used grandly and nobly, I shall thereby give you an impulse which will brush obstacles aside like chaff and achieve victories worthy of immortality.

Don't give up the ship! You may be walking along a thorny path, and if you were a mere animal you would lie down and die rather than meet its

difficulties. But you are more than an animal. There is eternal fire in your veins. You can conquer discouragements, for there is nothing in life that can overcome your soul. When you are in the depths and your eyes are brimmed with tears you shall hear the overture of the angels and gather strength as you listen.

Don't give up the ship! You may declare that you have been placed in the wrong environment; you may feel in your heart the heat of a blazing ambition which your outward circumstances have suppressed; you may be so shut in by domestic in-harmony, by the lack of sympathy, that your life is circumscribed within the narrowest limits, and you despair of doing anything worthy of even your own approval. If, however, you are conscious that you have ability of any kind, though it be ability which you have no opportunity to use as you would like to use it, that fact should give you a secret satisfaction. If you have any power, any genius whatever, apply it to the smallest duties that lie in front of you. An archangel fettered would still be an archangel. If he knows what he is, and God knows what he is, and God sees that he is doing a peasant's work with

an archangel's hand and brain, it matters very little, after all, whether the world smiles in admiration or frowns in indifference. If you are all right toward heaven you can afford to be unnoticed on earth. The time will come when you shall be known to be what you are, and that will be a sweet by and by for your soul.

Don't give up the ship! Life has its hardships; one meets them at every turn, but put your whole heart into your work, and at sundown you shall be glad and content. The Father has a long memory, and in some future day you will find that He has not forgotten you or your humble duties nobly done.

There are dark hours for all of us. Rich and poor alike, literate and illiterate, the so-called high and low, have at times an armful of sorrows. No one is exempt from the general fate, though it sometimes seems as though there were favorites of fortune. The rule, however, is inexorable in its application. Trials are manifold, but a strong heart need not succumb.

If this life were all, we could not bear these griefs and disappointments. It would hardly be

worth our while to bear them. But with eternity before us, with a new environment awaiting us, with innumerable opportunities beckoning us onward, let us be brave, bearing our burdens with the calm fortitude of a noble character, resigned to the inevitable and making the best possible use of it.

Walk with dignity the path marked out. Clean of heart and hand, with a soul above reproach, take your life as an imprisoned archangel would take it, and make a ladder of it, down which the dear ones may come to bring you messages of love and peace.

It seems to me that that is the new Gospel, or rather the new and true interpretation of the old Gospel. That is what Jesus did, and in a far-off way we can follow His example.

Whatever your circumstances, God lives and is with you.

You cannot be disheartened as long as your faith in Him abides.

The strong man is not the world's man, but God's man.

To-day is short, but to-morrow will be long, and

it is better so to live that your regrets will be short
and your joy long than that your pleasures shall be
short and your regrets long.

Don't give up the ship!

WE BELONG TO TWO WORLDS

The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.—1 John ii., 17.

“**I** AM a man of the world!” That is your boast. But it is really nothing to boast of, for you have dissipated one half of your heritage. Or perhaps you have never known anything about that lost half. The ideal man is not simply and only a man of the world, but a man of two worlds. Until he recognizes that fact and governs himself accordingly he cannot sing his song with a clear voice or do his own soul justice.

There must be two sides to a twenty-dollar gold piece or it is not genuine. In like manner a genuine life must have two worlds in view all the time.

This lower world is man's field of action, in which he shows his mettle, and in which he not only forms his character, just as a boy learns his lessons at school, but adds to the aggregate strength or weak-

ness of his fellows. If he is ablaze others will light their candles at his fire ; if he is merely cold ashes they will blow into people's eyes and so blind them that they cannot see the truth.

The other world is a reservoir from which he draws daily inspiration,—patience with which to achieve under difficulties, hope, cheerfulness, spiritual repose, and resignation which sweetens the soul that would otherwise be embittered.

When a man is only half himself he is satisfied with to-day, its ambitions and pleasures. When he is his whole self this world is too narrow for his soul, and he finds a peculiar happiness in the contemplation of another sphere which will furnish him the opportunity to attain his manifest destiny.

It seems very odd to hear a man argue that he is under no obligation to obey a God whom he has never publicly confessed. He is a man of the world, neither knows nor cares anything about religion, and therefore claims the right to do as he pleases.

Now, it is a man's business to know something about the laws of the world he lives in, and it will not help him in the least to shrug his shoulders and declare that he does not believe in those laws. The

stern fact is that the laws will act whether he believes in them or not. They are quite independent of anything he may or may not believe, and after a while he will learn that it is very much more to his interest to know what they are and to give strict heed to them than to ignore them or deny their existence.

He sees this with regard to physical law and is very careful about breaking it. When standing on the edge of a precipice he may deny the existence of gravitation, but he will not take the leap and thus show the courage of his convictions. The law does not care a jot or tittle about his personal theories. It will do its work in spite of his arguments, and he will certainly suffer the consequence of his rashness.

The spiritual law is equally rigid, though it acts more slowly. For that reason some men are deceived. You may not believe in purity of body, but still the revenges of time are awful. You may ignore all moral principles, you may even succeed so far as to make a fortune based on evil practices; but when you investigate your own character, if you ever dare to do so, you will be forced to

acknowledge that you know little about the sweetest and most reposeful and joyous part of life, and that you have been feeding on "the husks which the swine did eat."

I know of no spectacle more painful to contemplate than that of a man who has persistently used the world for purposes of selfish gain, ignoring all obligations of honesty, charity, and generosity, and then in his old age sees himself just as he is—dwarfed, twisted, incapable of holy emotions or high aspirations; a poor, miserable creature who has lived a mistake and reached a period beyond which recovery is impossible so far as this life is concerned. For such a man to see himself just as he is, to measure his own exact weight, to know vividly how he is regarded by his fellow-men, to be conscious that his example, as bad as it is brilliant, has led scores astray—that must be a doom too dreadful for words to express. I have heard a great deal about hell, but that man can tell me of more horrors than I have ever conceived.

To have your soul take you in hand and show you how you have abused it; to have some angel paint the picture of what you might have been, and then

force you by divine compulsion to compare it with what you really are, that would be simply awful.

If you answer the charges of the angel by saying that you are a man of the world, the reply will be forthcoming like a peal of thunder: "You were not born to be a man of the world, but a man of God." If you know enough to use this world you should know enough to use it in such way that if there is any other world you will be fitted to enter it without shame.

No; there is but one way to live, and that is to live justly. The world is large and wide, but there is no spot where a man can hide from the moral consequences of dishonesty. A noble character is not created, it is developed. Even on the low plane of pure expediency it is better to be true to yourself than to be false. You cannot ignore a tornado, you must protect yourself against it. You cannot ignore God or His laws, for they refuse to be ignored.

Religion is only another word for common sense. It is not a mystery, it is a plain and simple fact. If you live grandly, nobly, justly; if you direct your voyage by the stars; if you can look the world in the

face without a blush, knowing that the world can see your soul and your motives as well as your actions, you have that kind of religion which is contained in the Sermon on the Mount, and it will suffice for here and hereafter.

THE SOUL'S GRANDEUR

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.—Romans viii., 16.

IT is a common but very erroneous impression that when a child is born he is not a religious being, and that at some time in the soul's career religion must be imported from without. The old dogma which insists that the natural man is a depraved creature, and that he cannot be saved until God gives him something that was denied him when he first came into this wonderful world, has sounded through the ages like a depressing dirge. It is a reflection on the goodness and the wisdom of the Creator which we have a right to resent.

The man who has musical genius and gives to us compositions which will ring in the ears of coming generations did not import into his soul the love of music or the ability to express it. He did not purchase the spirit of song or harmony, he simply

developed it. It must have been a component part of himself when he was in his mother's womb, and though in after-years it may have been smothered by adverse circumstances and he was unaware of its existence, still it was there, and only needed to be waked up. When he became conscious of his rich possession and of its high possibilities he was musically born again, his whole attitude was changed, and new aspirations, new dreams, new pleasures, and new achievements lured him upward.

The same is true of religion. The divine within us recognizes the divine everywhere; the God in the soul recognizes the God in the universe. We cannot search for holiness as the prospector searches for gold and surprise ourselves by finding it. There must be in our personal depths something which longs for what is in the infinite depths or we should never know which way to move in order to discover it. The bit of magnetic iron is attracted to the great bulk of magnetic ore because the little bit has in small measure the same quality which characterizes the whole bulk. The atom is related to the measureless in some mysterious way, and the tendency of both, therefore, is to come together. When

this greater and this lesser are united the greater controls the lesser, and the lesser finds its happiness in that control.

The soul is the atom. It has without doubt gone wrong, and is still going wrong. In consequence it fails to achieve its perfect mission, and is unsatisfied and discontented. The spark of God is, however, inherent in it and cannot be extinguished. No part of God is ever annihilated, and that divine element which the soul received from the Creator cannot be eliminated by any gusts of crime. It may be covered up, hampered, choked, unable to express itself, because selfishness is cruel, ruthless, reckless, and given to desperate deeds, but it is indestructible and will some time come to its own. The worst man that ever breathed has the making of an archangel in him, because he has the breath of God in him, and only time and opportunity—in other words, only the proper environment—are needed for the nobler self to begin its education. This was the thought of Christ. He saw that smothered spark in the penitent thief on the cross, and He saw it in the Magdalen who tearfully sought His aid. The great central truth in His teaching is the dignity of

human nature, the possibilities of the soul when selfishness is rooted out and love is substituted. His mission on earth was to emancipate the divine from its worldly enthrallment ; to wake up the soul ; to tell us that we must live like God's children because we were born members of God's great family. He opened the very gates of heaven in order to disclose our eternal destiny, knowing that if we properly appreciate ourselves all mean and sordid motives will drop like frost-bitten leaves ; that when one gets a glimpse of God he must needs become godlike.

There is, therefore, nothing so encouraging or so cheering as religion. You are a prince of the universe, and whatever is sordid is foreign to you and has no relation to your better self. The vicissitudes of life, its strange struggles and hardships, are a part of your earthly campaign, the road which leads to ultimate victory. You may be severely tried,—as who is not?—but trial with God's presence is better than worldly success without it. You may lose much and mourn its loss, but the losses of this earthly life prepare the soul for immortality, and in some mysterious way develop and ripen it.

You came from God. Then use the experiences of these lower years as a school from which at graduation—that is, at death—you will enter the higher life equipped and ready for its opportunities.

ANGEL MINISTRY

And, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.—
St. Matthew iv., 11.

WE have absolute faith in the revelations of science, as indeed we ought to have. The wonders of the physical world have been so long in hiding that they now seem anxious to make themselves known, and the genius of research can hardly wander into any bypath without discovering some new law which can be made of practical benefit. So frequently has this happened during the last three generations that we have ceased to be startled by any fresh announcement. We recognize the age of miracles. We are in the midst of a daily increasing multitude of them, and if the future can keep pace with the past our children's children will be able to say that they have a new heaven and a new earth.

Running parallel with these victories over material things is a quickened curiosity concerning

things spiritual. Science and religion are like the bass and treble of a great organ when touched by the hands of a master, for they blend in perfect harmony and produce results which even angels may listen to. They are simply different parts of the same musical score, for neither can be perfect without the other. What God says in the clouds and what He says in the Book must be closely related. The Sermon on the Mount is akin to the truth in astronomy. There is but one Voice in the universe—it whispers in the south wind and thunders in the tempest.

We accept without question the declarations of science, but we receive the Scriptures only in part. One of the most essential elements of the Bible—the helpful presence of invisible beings and their ability to extend their good offices—is, oddly enough, looked upon with doubt and suspicion. In our religious conventions we insist on plenary inspiration, and at the same time ignore the fact that constant communication between heaven and earth is one of the corner-stones of the Bible. We are told in Holy Writ that God is always within reach of a prayerful voice, and Christ distinctly promised that He would

come unto those who should call upon Him, and abide with them, and it is asserted that a cloud of witnesses interested in our welfare "hold thee in full survey." But these facts are lost sight of amid the fogs of dogma and have never had, and do not now have, the hold on our souls which is their due.

We are, however, facing in that direction, and every step brings us nearer to the perfect day. The time is not far distant when humanity will be greatly blessed by a fuller appreciation of this truth, when souls will receive added strength through these channels, now choked, if not closed, by the narrowness of prejudice.

We cannot live at our best until the other world is as real as this one; until it becomes as easy and as natural to commune with the dear ones who have gone as it is to hold converse with the dear ones in the household. If this seems strange and startling it ought not to be either the one or the other, for it is as plainly taught as are the Ten Commandments.

I welcome, therefore, what rather conceitedly styles itself the New Thought—whereas it is in reality the oldest thought of all. It may be somewhat fantastic, and may go farther than we are willing to keep it company, but it emphasizes the

immanence of God, the presence of Christ in human affairs, and the willing assistance of angels to enable us to do our work and bear our burdens, and in these respects we should bid it cordial welcome. He who turns our thoughts upward, bids us rely on the Father for support, and assures us that, poor and weak as we are, we have all Heaven on our side, does us a service for which we cannot be too grateful. And in an age in which men are clinging to wealth with insatiable greed, magnifying its importance beyond all due proportions, such thoughts are as refreshing as a breath from the sea on an August day. They have a place, and their voice is the voice of good cheer.

We have not yet outlived the Scriptures. There is nothing better in sight ; neither is there likely to be. What we need is to re-read them and think seriously of those passages which we have heretofore ignored. We shall be surprised, delighted, and blessed. Spiritual dawn will give way to day, our outward look will be larger and our upward brighter. Burdens will be lighter, the future glorious, and the heart in harmony with the love with which God has flooded the universe.

BE NOT DISCOURAGED

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?—Psalms xlii., 5.

WHEN I was young and full of enthusiasm it puzzled me sorely that David could be called a man after God's own heart, for he certainly played some very bass notes on his harp. He was a man of moods, sometimes aspiring to perfection and losing himself in ecstatic meditation, and at other times sinking to such a low level that even repentance and remorse covered his sin with difficulty. How such an one could be spoken of with unstinted approval was beyond my youthful ken, and I indulged in a degree of spiritual repugnance.

But in my after-life, when on many occasions I was forced to lower my lance and acknowledge defeat, I learned that a man may keep the ideal always in view, determining to reach it at last, but still be occasionally overcome, thrown down, unhorsed by

outward and inward temptations, and then I had a great respect for David and was thankful that God could regard the general trend of his life and disregard some of its unhappy details.

The seer and singer of Israel is a perfect representative of your human nature and mine. There were hours when he was in heaven, his soul in direct communion with the loftiest thoughts, the earth a stepping-stone to the stars, the angels within reach of his voice, the air he breathed as free from taint of sin as the air of the New Jerusalem.

And there are few of us who have not enjoyed equally transfiguring moments, periods of conscious nearness to God, of such holy aspirations that the cares and struggles of this world have been forgotten. We have literally spent an hour in Paradise, almost seen the face of the Father, almost heard the music of the upper land, and felt that never again would we succumb to the irritable and harassing cares of life, for with this new accession of strength we would put all things under our feet and conquer ourselves and the world. This experience has come like a flash and gone as it came, but it has left sweet memories behind it. We have caught a glimpse of

our higher selves, of ourselves as we shall be when the mills of Providence have done their perfect work in us. When we get back to our petty troubles and our ordinary mood we are like the sailor who has drifted on a troubled sea, with no chart or compass, who has caught sight of the blazing lamp in the lighthouse yonder and then lost the blessed vision in a veil of fog.

There were times also when David descended into hell. He hung his harp on a willow and was either dumb with despair or cried out in tones of profound misery,—from exaltation to tears of self-reproach, from the mountain summit to the malarial valley, from an ecstasy to unutterable agony,—and all because some tidal wave had swept away his faith, his serenity of trust, and left him, as the fierce storm leaves the shattered vessel, a pitiable wreck on the rocks.

And here again the resemblance is perfect. Not one of us but has explored those depths. There are times when life seems an inextricable tangle; when the spirit of evil and injustice broods over the universe; when nothing is as it should be, and when we ourselves are warped in heart by the hot fires that

have burned within, as the iron frame of a building is crooked into a shapeless mass by a conflagration. What does it all amount to, we ask, and what will be the end of it all? Why stem the tide? Why not go with the current, no matter where it takes us? This ceaseless struggle, is it worth our while? The mythical pit which made our childhood shudder can furnish no pangs more excessive in their agony than some of these passages that we have passed through.

But we cannot stop here. Having followed David thus far we must go with him still farther. Despair is infidelity. Discouragement is weakness, mental, physical, spiritual. We forget certain things and must bring them sharply to mind. We have been listening to music in the minor key, but there are exultant notes, and if we hearken we shall hear them and regain possession of ourselves. There are clouds, but also blue sky. The clouds will pass if we are patient, but the blue sky is there forever. There are thunderbolts, and little wonder if we tremble when they strike, but the world is not all thunderbolts. There are fields and flowers and summer sunshine and better days to come.

God has not deserted His universe. The angels

have not colonized on some distant planet. Be stout in heart and strong in purpose. Mend the broken harp, and you will find that its strings will respond in joyous strains. Brush aside the abnormal mood. You may have thought this life a vale of tears, but there can be no vale of tears if God walks through it with you. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Is not the shoulder fitted to its burden if you will allow it to be? You may suffer hardship, misfortune may tread close on your heels, but the evil days will pass. The clouded sun will shine again, the pelting rain will cease. You will yet praise Him who is the health of your countenance and your God.

Never lose your faith. The compass is just as true in tempest as in calm. You may be bruised and broken, but there is no power on earth that can prevent you from reaching the haven at last. The worse your fortune may seem to be, the more you need faith; and the more faith you have, the better will you bear and the more easily you will conquer.

REPOSE OF SOUL IS STRENGTH

In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.—
Isaiah xxx., 15.

IN my early youth I watched a game of chess played by two experts, and the lesson I learned has lasted me a lifetime. For a while the chances were even, and it would have been rash to prophesy the result. The victory hung in the balance, and I was breathless. At last I noticed that one of the players was losing his quietness, and then I made the startling discovery that in his case, at least, the loss of quietness was the loss of strength. Impulse and rashness took the place of calm wisdom. He made hasty moves when he should have been especially deliberate. In thirty minutes the end came. The quiet player won and the hasty player was defeated.

From that incident I deduced a general principle which has served me a good turn in many an

embarrassment and helped me to overcome many a temptation. In life, as in chess, other things being equal, the man who acts slowly, measuring the consequence of what he proposes to do, is apt to gain his end, while the man who is governed by impulse rather than reason does himself very slender justice and fails in the achievement of his ambition. One of the best things in life is to have undisputed possession of yourself, and one of the worst things—indeed it is a positive misfortune—is to let yourself get away from yourself.

I revert again to the Christ. Whatever your theological opinion may be, we must all agree that in character, in the manner in which He met the experiences of life, He serves as our guide as surely as the north star serves the mariner. He furnished a perfect illustration of my text, for the quietness of His soul was the strength of His soul. No haste, no worry, no wild or rash activity, marred His career. He could say to the Sea of Galilee, "Peace, be still!" but He had no need to command Himself to be quiet.

The ideal man is not the phlegmatic, the indifferent or sluggish man. Such a man is like

a pile of green wood, from which you can get no blaze. There is in him neither heat nor good cheer.

The ideal man is the man of many passions, impulses, ambitions, but all under control of a central will. If you wish your engine to do good work, you must have plenty of coal in the grate and plenty of steam in the boiler. But you must be master of the steam, for it is omnipotent to do your will if rightly directed and omnipotent to destroy you unless so directed. There is a great deal of religion in simply keeping quiet. It is the best thing for you to do, and at the same time the hardest. The rash people in the world spend most of their time in regret for what they have done. Friendships have been broken by words which no more represented their real sentiments than a house on fire represents the happiness of the family that lives in it. Domestic misery has been caused by language, hasty and unconsidered language, every syllable of which falsified the true feeling of the person who uttered it. The speaker was simply obsessed, a bad influence threw him into mental chaos, and his words were a blizzard — a cyclone. He could not control it

because he had not learned one of the important secrets of success.

More and worse than that. Many a man has made a failure of his career for the same reason. The New Testament is worth studying if you would find the best way to get on in life and to make the most of the varied experiences which come to you.

You are too much like the Sea of Galilee in a storm. You need some one at your side to cry constantly, "Be still!" But you ought not to need this, for you should be your own ruler and utter the command to yourself.

We are in a state of mind too constantly perturbed and restless. Small things throw us off our balance. We are suspicious, envious, and, last of all, embittered.

Keep quiet. Get into the habit of thinking before speaking or acting. Spend half an hour in serene meditation every day, asking what it is worth while to do, and why it is worth while to do it. Then you will reach the conclusion that there are some things which it is worth your while not to do.

All this is included in the broad idea of religion. It teaches you how to create within yourself a spirit

of quietness, to attain that self-poise which is so necessary to happiness, and thus to be at your best when some unusual struggle is at hand.

The laws of the universe will then be on your side, and you will be able to overcome without effort, for the events of life are made harder by the restlessness with which we meet them; and they could be made less harmful if we would meet them quietly and accept them as quarried marble to be cut into shape by the patient chisel of a nature which is determined to be as contented as possible.

HOPEFUL MOURNING

To give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.
—Isaiah lxi., 3.

IN the long, long ago a custom prevailed which gave to All Saints' Day a unique kind of good cheer. The separated members of the family met in the old home, and at the midday feast chairs were set not only for those who were visibly present, but also for those who had passed on to the higher life. It was a recognition of the fact that hearts are the same whether they are on this side or the other side of the border. The dear ones were not neglected, though with trembling steps they had passed through the shadow of death and emerged into the bright sunlight of heaven. No one was forgotten, and faith that the departed still retained their interest in those whose work was not yet finished, and that they were glad to come back to add their mite to the happy occasion, gave the coloring of hope

to the reunion and made the future radiant and glorious.

That was a phase of religion which reminds us of the time when the disciples who had followed the Master through three lonely years were gathered together and "Jesus came and stood in the midst and said unto them, Peace be unto you." That incident was perhaps the origin of this custom which glorified All Saints' Day, for it was well argued that if the Christ could come to those whom He loved then our other loved ones might come also.

It is right that we should mourn, for even a temporary separation wounds the heart. A goodbye can never pass the lips without setting free the fountain of our tears. But mourning with faith is not like mourning without it. The sky is clouded when we part with our dear ones, even though the eyes see beyond the clouds; but the tempest rages fiercely when we have no hope, and the very roots of our being are torn up by its destructive and relentless power.

There is no one on the footstool who makes such a draught on our sympathy and pity as he who knows no future. The vibrations of his grief when

he looks over the churchyard wall form a kind of crescendo which at last breaks the heart. His despair, like the blind Samson, puts its arms about the pillars of the temple and brings the whole structure of his being into ruin. We can bear disaster if only hope is left, but disaster and despair are too much for human nature to endure.

Still, we who mourn are not wholly in the right. We robe ourselves in the gloomiest black, which is a wall through which the angels of relief cannot enter. Black is a kind of infidelity which, though we are unconscious of it, is very harmful, a sort of barrier to the sweet influences of another world. The extreme of mourning apparel is too much a display, and it shows that we have not the courage of our convictions. As a symbol of our state of mind it is not in accordance with the precepts of our religion. It is the garb of a starless midnight, quite unworthy of our belief in immortality. God has not made anything black,—then why should we? His sunshine covers the very grave with grass and flowers; His universe is bright and cheery from dawn to dawn. Why, then, should we intimate by our garments that He has neglected to reveal our proper attitude

in one of the supreme moments of life? The purpose of religion is to make us serene, quiescent, resigned, because death is not what it seems to be, but is, on the other hand, a birth of some freed soul from the limitations and pains of a wearied body.

Moreover, a great deal of our grief is selfish. We have suffered an affliction and we think of ourselves. If our faith is worth having, we know that they who have gone are better off than those who remain. That fact we do not dwell upon. Instead of being grateful that there is a heaven, and that our loved ones are there, that they are beyond the vicissitudes of time, we mourn simply for our own loss, forgetful of their gain. This is not well.

We want a more triumphant faith. Our eyes are dull, and we do not yet see the truth. One glimpse of heaven, and we should lay aside the mere trappings of woe, for they are dismal and heartbreaking. We may weep, for tears are a lens through which the invisible sometimes becomes visible; but this despair, this feeling that everything has suddenly been plunged in darkness, is all wrong.

God still lives, the loved ones still live, having entered a sphere of larger usefulness, and there is a

royal highway from the throne of God's infinite love to our little earth along which they will visit us in our sorrow. Real religion may bow its head, but beneath all other thoughts is the radiant belief that they and we shall meet again. Sorrow can wear a diadem of hope, and even the breaking heart may smile because the Eternal Father and the "house not made with hands" are in the near distance.

TRUE SUCCESS

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?—St. Matthew vii., 16.

THERE is an old saw which tells us that nothing succeeds like success, which is another way of saying that success vindicates its own methods. The statement is false and misleading, and as an incentive to youth it is wholly disastrous. To put a disregard of the means employed into a young man's mind and so convince him that if he accomplishes his purpose the world will ask nothing more, is to wound him as fatally as though you drove a knife into his heart.

In very truth, there is a kind of apparent success which spells defeat, and a kind of apparent failure which is reckoned success in heaven. In other words, the best thing for a man is to be manly always. A lie is apt to come home to sleep and bring with it a large brood of unpleasant memories, and

the man who cheats cheats himself out of more than he cheats his neighbor. To be straightforward is worth something, and especially in times when temptations are both many and strong.

It is a beautiful world and at the same time an almost cruel world. That is to say, it is governed by law, and the law is inexorable. There are no circumstances under which you can gather figs from thistles. The universe is built on the basis of honesty, and dishonesty finds no nook or corner in which to hide itself. You may demur at this and tell me that many a rogue is happy, that many a man deals in crooked measures and has the respect of the community. I doubt both propositions. Men are measured pretty accurately in the long run, and a man is not likely to wear his heart on his sleeve and proclaim his regrets. The world has not yet been turned upside down. Every man loses unless his life is square. Eternal logic runs in that direction. Wrong is always wrong and right is always right. If you look at life from that standpoint you are safe ; if not, you are in danger.

Beneath a man's reputation, which is sometimes a mere mask with false features, is his character, his

real self. If that is not upright he has a hornets' nest in his soul and he is being stung to death. He is not at peace with himself, is not content, is not happy, and cannot be happy. If this is not true, then we have made a mistake in our conception of God. I do not care for what that man seems to be, nor for what he poses as being, nor yet for what the people say he is—he has trampled on his immortal nature, has misdirected his energies, and until you can find figs on thistles he will not be satisfied with himself. As far as the east is from the west, so far is he from what God and nature intended him to be.

Strip off his wealth, tear down his social and commercial position, lay bare his inmost soul, and what do you find? Any material on which to build a character fit for heaven? And yet, unless a man lives for heaven, he does not live at all. This little life, a mere hand's breadth of time, is as nothing. It is the eternity ahead of us that gives significance to the present, and it is a man's fitness for heaven which stamps him as real gold or counterfeit coin. It is not what we appear to be here, but what we shall honestly be when we get there, that counts. The

day after death, when we leave all these trappings behind us, life's falsities and wrongs will tell the story. Earth fading away in the distance, immortality looking us in the face, asking us who we are and what we are—then we shall step on the scales and be weighed. If we are found to be just and true and loyal the angels will be glad to welcome us, but if we bring nothing but our misdeeds we shall be pitied because of the great mistake we have made. God's blessing on a man's honest life will be worth more than the whole world's wealth.

The first thing for a reasonable human being to do, therefore, is to get into harmony with the universe, and the second is to stay there. In that statement is included the essential element of religion. It marks an ascending grade from the lower to the higher altitude of mind, until at last we step across the grave into heaven. Nothing equals in value a noble life. Live well, then, live nobly; live for others, as the blessed Christ did. When you go, leave this old earth a little better for your having been in it. Guard your peace of mind, which is the best of all treasures; walk humbly, doing the Lord's

will, and you will have nothing to complain of either here or hereafter. There you have your creed,—a short one, indeed, but quite long enough for your purpose.

THE END



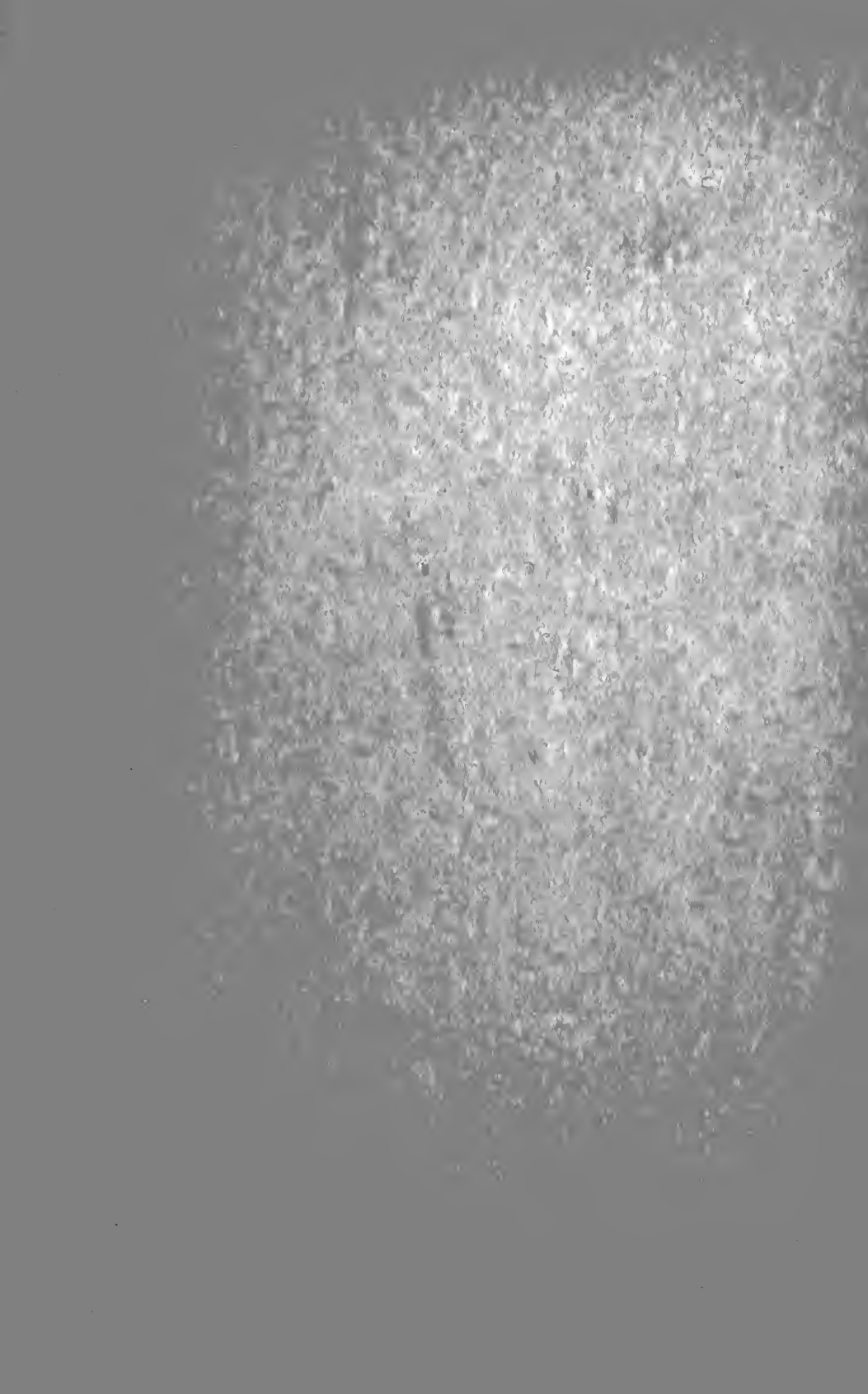
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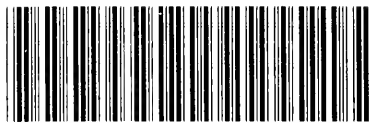
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